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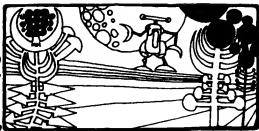
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**TED
WHITE**

EDITORIAL



ANNIVERSARY COUNTDOWN: Although, as I type this, our 50th Anniversary issue is still a year away from release, work proceeds upon it and it will be editorially complete in less than six months.

In many respects our 50th Anniversary issue will be unique among stf magazines, and one way in which it will be unique is the fact that no other stf magazine has ever celebrated fifty years of publication. What's more, this is not simply a case of **AMAZING** having survived where other titles fell by the wayside: there were no other stf magazines *before* **AMAZING**—anywhere in the world.

Although some aspects of stf predate **AMAZING**'s inception—the “scientific romances” of Verne and Wells, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, et al—these works existed in large measure as part of the popular mainstream of their times and not as part of any specific genre of work, such as science fiction is (for better or worse) considered today. Verne, for example, wrote a sizable body of novels, most of which would not be considered stf today (*Mysterious Island*, for example, although the sequel to *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, is basically an adventure story much more in the tradition of *Robinson Crusoe*), and these were all more or less equally popular with his readers, many of whom considered Verne's works a genre in and of

themselves, “stf” and non-stf alike.

The basis for modern stf, as a distinct category of fiction, had its genesis in the technological revolution of the early 20th Century, and the utopian ideals this engendered among those who saw a technological society liberating man from the near-slavery of subsistence-level drudgery under which he labored for most of human history. Technophiles were fascinated by machines as labor-saving devices, and they included among their ranks the last great wave of homegrown inventors—one of whom was Hugo Gernsback, the founder of this magazine and of modern, genre stf.

Gernsback had been publishing magazines devoted to radio, electronics and electrical inventions for a decade before he launched **AMAZING STORIES** in 1926. Periodically he published a short story or two as well as articles. Few of these stories had much literary merit; that was not necessary. They were fictionalizations of the philosophy and spirit which informed the articles: amusements for would-be inventors and technophiles. But they were popular—sufficiently so that Gernsback began considering a magazine to be entirely devoted to such visionary literature. After a few trial balloons and false-starts, the magazine debuted with an April, 1926, cover date: the first issue of

AMAZING STORIES.

Gernsback had originally intended the magazine to be titled SCIENTIFIC-FICTION, but was dissuaded in favor of the more "popular" title, AMAZING. That was, perhaps, unfortunate: although taken literally "Amazing Stories" is a good, descriptive title for a magazine which was devoted to stories of wondrous inventions and the world of tomorrow, the adjective, "Amazing," was devalued in subsequent decades as competitive stf magazines used "Astounding," "Thrilling," "Astonishing," "Startling," "Stirring," "Dynamic," etc., as prefixive adjectives in their titles, and the use of such superlatives became associated with the more melodramatic pulp-magazine forms of stf. (Today "Amazing" is the only survivor, *Astounding Science Fiction* having evolved—no doubt for this very reason—into *Analog* at the close of the 1950's.) Indeed, periodically I receive letters from readers who feel that we should change our title to something more modern, dignified, and mature in its associations. To some extent I have done this: In 1970, AMAZING STORIES became AMAZING SCIENCE FICTION STORIES with the September issue although the spine continued to use the earlier title for another two years; in 1972 the spine was changed to read AMAZING SCIENCE FICTION with the May issue, and the cover logo modified to say the same an issue later. Last issue the cover logo was again modified to give the words "Science Fiction" greater prominence, while proportionally reducing the "Amazing." I plan to continue to gradually reduce the "Amazing" over the next year or two. But I cannot see dropping it entirely: the word, "Amazing," is an intrinsic part of this magazine's five-decade

tradition.

With AMAZING's inception, with the creation of a magazine devoted entirely and exclusively to "scientific-fiction," a category of fiction was created and identified as such. To a large extent science fiction is today a direct outgrowth and evolution of the fiction published in AMAZING's first few years, when there were no other stf magazines in existence save annual and quarterly spinoffs, also bearing the "Amazing" appellation. One reason for this is that with the regular, monthly publication of a magazine devoted to one such species of fiction, new conventions were quickly established among both readers and authors. As time went on, authors built their stories upon earlier stories, using or modifying concepts introduced by other authors, their stories to some extent dependant upon the reader's prior knowledge of these conventions.

Early stories, for instance, closely investigated the *process* by which a man might journey, say, to the moon. But as gradual agreement evolved out of these stories on the nature of such processes (cannonballs to the moon, in the case of Verne, or "antigravity" devices, in the case of Wells, were discarded in favor of the more realistic and conceivable rocket-propulsion then promoted in this country by such pioneers as Goddard) the emphasis of the stories shifted to what would be found or accomplished on the moon or by the trip to the moon. By the late forties, trip-to-the-moon stories were a largely exhausted vein (Heinlein's first juvenile, *Rocketship Galileo*, is probably the last memorable novel of its type, although a case might be made for Arthur C. Clarke's early-fifties *Prelude to Space*, a largely earthbound story), for both readers and authors of stf—even though to a

(cont. on page 111)

MARUNE: ALASTOR 933

JACK VANCE

Jack Vance introduced the Alastor Cluster and its five trillion people in his "Trullion: Alastor 2262" (March & June, 1973); he explored another part of that same universe in "The Domains of Koryphon" (August & October, 1974). Now he returns to the Alastor Cluster, to the world of Marune (Alastor 933), where live those most particularly peculiar people, the Rhune. Once again, Vance brings to life a world of diversity of people and customs—

(Part One)

Introduction

ALASTOR CLUSTER, a node of thirty thousand live stars, uncounted dead hulks, and vast quantities of interstellar detritus, clung to the inner rim of the galaxy with the Unfortunate Waste before, the Nonestic Gulf beyond and the Gaean Reach a sparkling haze to the side. For the space-traveler, no matter which his angle of approach, a remarkable spectacle was presented: constellations blazing white, blue and red; curtains of luminous stuff, broken here, obscured there, by black storms of dust; star-streams wandering in and out; whorls and spatters of phosphorescent gas.

Should Alastor Cluster be considered a segment of the Gaean Reach? The folk of the Cluster, some four or five trillion of them on more than three thousand worlds, seldom reflected upon the matter, and indeed considered

themselves neither Gaean nor Alastrid. The typical inhabitant, when asked as to his origin, might perhaps cite his native world or, more usually, his local district, as if this place were so extraordinary, so special and widely famed that its reputation hung on every tongue of the galaxy.

Parochialism dissolved before the glory of the Connatic, who ruled Alastor Cluster from his palace on the world Numenes. The current Connatic, Jaram Ursht, sixteenth of the Idite dynasty, often pondered the quirk of fate which had appointed him to his singular condition, only to smile at his own irrationality: no matter who occupied the position, that person would frame for himself the same marveling question.

The inhabited planets of the Cluster had little in common except their lack of uniformity. They

Illustrated by Stephen E. Fabian



were large and small, dank and dry, benign and perilous, populous and empty: no two alike. Some manifested tall mountains, blue seas, bright skies; on others clouds hung forever above the moors, and no variety existed except the alternation of night and day. Such a world, in fact, was Bruse-Tansel, Alastor 1102, with a population of two hundred thousand, settled for the most part in the neighborhood of Lake Vain, where they worked principally at the dyeing of fabrics. Four space-ports served Bruse-Tansel, the most important being that facility located at Carfaunge.

Chapter 1

MERGAN HAD ACHIEVED his post, Superintendent at the Carfaunge Space-Port, largely because the position demanded a tolerance for unalterable routine. Mergan not only tolerated routine; he depended upon it. He would have opposed the cessation of such nuisances as the morning rains, the glass lizards with their squeaks and clicks, the walking slimes which daily invaded the area, because then he would have been required to change established procedure.

On the morning of a day he would later identify as 10th Mariel Gaean* he arrived as usual at his office. Almost before he had settled behind his desk, the night porter appeared with a blank-faced young man in a nondescript

gray suit. Mergan uttered a wordless grumble; he had no taste for problems at any time, least of all before he had composed himself for the day. The situation at the very least promised a disruption of routine. At last he muttered: "Well, Dinster, what do you have here?"

Dinster, in a piping over-loud voice, called out, "Sorry to bother you, sir, but what shall we do with this gentleman? He seems to be ill."

"Find him a doctor," growled Mergan. "Don't bring him here. I can't help him."

"It's not that kind of illness, sir. More mental, if you get my meaning."

"Your meaning escapes me," said Mergan. "Why not just tell me what's wrong?"

Dinster politely indicated his charge. "When I came on duty he was sitting in the waiting room and he's been there since. He hardly speaks; he doesn't know his name, nor anything about himself."

Mergan inspected the young man with some faint awakening of interest. "Hello, sir," he barked.

*Numerous systems of chronometry create confusion across Alastor Cluster and the Gaean Reach, despite attempts at reform. In any given locality at least three systems of reckoning are in daily use: scientific chronometry, based upon the orbital frequency of the K-state hydrogen electron; astronomical time—'Gaeian Standard Time'—which provides synchronism across the human universe; and local time.

"What's the trouble?"

The young man shifted his gaze from the window to Mergan, but offered no response. Mergan gradually allowed himself to become perplexed. Why had the young man's gold-brown hair been hacked short, as if by swift savage strokes of a scissors? And the garments: clearly a size too large for the spare frame!

"Speak!" commanded Mergan. "Can you hear? Tell me your name!"

The young man put on a thoughtful expression but remained silent.

"A vagabond of some sort," Mergan declared. "He probably wandered up from the dye-works. Send him off again down the road."

Dinster shook his head. "This lad's no vagabond. Look at his hands."

Mergan reluctantly followed Dinster's suggestion. The hands were strong and well kept and showed evidence neither of toil nor submersion in dye. The man's features were firm and even; the poise of his head suggested status. Mergan, who preferred to ignore the circumstances of his own birth, felt an uncomfortable tingle of deference and corresponding resentment. Again he barked at the young man: "Who are you? What is your name?"

"I don't know." The voice was slow and labored, and colored with an accent Mergan failed to recognize.

"Where is your home?"

"I don't know."

Mergan became unreasonably sarcastic. "Do you know anything?"

Dinster ventured an opinion. "Looks to me, sir, as if he came aboard one of yesterday's ships."

Mergan asked the young man: "What ship did you arrive on? Do you have friends here?"

The young man fixed him with a brooding dark-gray gaze, and Mergan became uncomfortable. He turned to Dinster. "Does he carry papers? Or money?"

Dinster muttered to the young man: "Excuse me, sir." Gingerly he groped through the pockets of the rumpled gray suit. "I can't find anything here, sir."

"What about ticket stubs, or vouchers, or tokens?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

"It's what they call amnesia," said Mergan. He picked up a pamphlet and glanced down a list. "Six ships in yesterday. He might have arrived on any of them." Mergan touched a button. A voice said: "Prosidine, arrival gate."

Mergan described the amnesiac. "Do you know anything about him? He arrived sometime yesterday."

"Yesterday was more than busy; I didn't take time to notice anything."

"Make inquiries of your people and notify me."

Mergan thought a moment, then called the Carfaunge hospital. He was connected to the Di-

rector of Admissions, who listened patiently enough, but made no constructive proposals. "We have no facilities here for such cases. He has no money, you say? Definitely not, then."

"What shall I do with him? He can't stay here!"

"Consult the police; they'll know what to do."

Mergan called the police, and presently an official arrived in a police van, and the amnesiac was led away.

At the Hall of Inquiry, Detective Squil attempted interrogation, without success. The police doctor experimented with hypnotism, and finally threw up his hands. "A most stubborn condition; I have seen three previous cases, but nothing like this."

"What causes it?"

"Auto-suggestion, occasioned by emotional stress. This is most usual. But here—" he waved toward the uncomprehending amnesiac—"my instruments show no psychic charge of any kind. He has no emotions, and I have no leverage."

Detective Squil, a reasonable man, asked: "What can he do to help himself? He is obviously no ruffian."

"He should take himself to the Connatic's Hospital on Numenes."

Detective Squil laughed. "All very well. Who pays his fare?"

"The superintendent at the space-port should be able to arrange passage, or so I should think."

Squil made a dubious sound but turned to his telephone. As he expected, the Respectable Mergan, having transferred responsibility to the police, wanted no further part of the situation. "The regulations are most explicit," said Mergan. "I certainly cannot do as you suggest."

"We can't keep him here at the station."

"He appears able-bodied; let him earn his fare, which after all is not exorbitant."

"Easier said than done, what with his disability."

"What generally happens to indigents?"

"You know as well as I do; they're sent out to Gaswin. But this man is mentally ill; he's not an indigent."

"I can't argue that, because I don't know. At least I've pointed out a course of action."

"What is the fare to Numenes?"

"Third class by Prydania Line: two hundred and twelve ozols."

Squil terminated the call. He swung about to face the amnesiac. "Do you understand what I say to you?"

The answer came in a clear voice. "Yes."

"You are ill. You have lost your memory. Do you realize this?"

There was a pause of ten seconds. Squil wondered if any response were forthcoming. Then, haltingly: "You have told me so."

"We will send you to a place where you can work and earn money. Do you know how to

work?"

"No."

"Well, anyway, you need money: two hundred and twelve ozols. On Gaswin Moor you will earn three and a half ozols a day. In two or three months you will have earned enough money to take you to the Connatic's Hospital on Numenes, where you will be cured of your illness. Do you understand all this?"

The amnesiac reflected a moment, but made no response.

Squil rose to his feet. "Gaswin will be a good place for you, and perhaps your memory will return." He dubiously considered the amnesiac's blond-brown hair, which for mysterious reasons, someone had rudely cut short. "Do you have an enemy? Is there someone who does not like you?"

"I don't know. I can't remember any such person."

"What is your name?" shouted Squil, hoping to surprise that part of the brain which was withholding information.

The amnesiac's gray eyes narrowed slightly. "I don't know."

"Well, we have to find a name for you. Do you play hussade?"

"No."

"Think of that! A strong agile fellow like yourself! Still, we'll call you Pardero, after the great strike forward of the Schaide Thunderstones. So now, when someone calls out 'Pardero' you must respond. Is this understood?"

"Yes."

"Very well, and now you'll be

on your way to Gaswin. The sooner you begin your work, the sooner you'll arrive on Numenes. I'll speak with the director; he's a good chap and he'll see to your welfare."

Pardero, as his name now would be, sat uncertainly. Squil took pity on him. "It won't be so bad. Agreed, there are tough nuts at the work camp, but do you know how to handle them? You must be just a bit tougher than they are. Still, don't attract the attention of the disciplinary officer. You seem a decent fellow; I'll put in a word for you, and keep an eye on your progress. One bit of advice—no, two. First: never try to cheat on your work quota. The officials know all the tricks; they can smell out the sluggards as a kribbat smells out carrion. Second, do not gamble! Do you know what the word 'gamble' means?"

"No."

"It means to risk your money on games or wagers. Never be tempted or inveigled! Leave your money in the camp account! I advise you to form no friendships! Aside from yourself, there is only riff-raff at the camp. I wish you well. If you find trouble, call for Detective Squil. Can you remember that name?"

"Detective Squil"

"Good." Squil led the amnesiac out to a dock and put him aboard the daily transport to Gaswin. "A final word of advice! Confide in no one! Your name is Pardero; aside from this, keep your problems to

yourself! Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Good luck!"

THE TRANSPORT flew low under the overcast, close above the mottled black and purple moors, and presently landed beside a cluster of concrete buildings: the Gaswin Work Camp.

At the personnel office Pardero underwent entry formalities, facilitated by Squil's notification to the camp director. He was assigned a cubicle in a dormitory block, fitted with work boots and gloves and issued a copy of camp regulations, which he studied without comprehension. On the next morning he was detailed into a work party and sent out to harvest pods from coluroid creeper, the source of a peculiarly rich red dye.

Pardero gathered his quota without difficulty. Among the taciturn group of indigents his deficiency went unnoticed.

He ate his evening meal in silence, ignoring the presence of his fellows, who at last had begun to sense that all was not well with Pardero.

The sun sank behind the clouds; a dismal twilight fell across the moors. Pardero sat to the side of the recreation hall, watching a comic melodrama on the television screen. He listened intently to the dialogue; each word seemed to find an instantly receptive niche inside his brain with a semantic concept ready at hand.

His vocabulary grew and the range of his mental processes expanded. When the program was over he sat brooding, at last aware of his condition. He went to look into the mirror over the washbasin; the face which looked back at him was at once strange and familiar: a somber face with a good expanse of forehead, prominent cheekbones, hollow cheeks, dark gray eyes, a ragged thatch of dark gold hair.

A certain burly rogue named Woane attempted a jocularity. "Look yonder at Pardero! He stands like a man admiring a beautiful work of art!"

Pardero studied the mirror. Who was the man whose eyes stared so intently into his own?

Woane's hoarse murmur came from across the room. "Now he admires his haircut."

The remark amused Woane's friends. Pardero turned his head this way and that, wondering as to the motive behind the assault on his hair. Somewhere, it would seem, he had enemies. He turned slowly away from the mirror and resumed his seat at the side of the room.

The last traces of light left the sky; night had come to Gaswin Camp.

Something jerked deep at the bottom of Pardero's consciousness: a compulsion totally beyond his comprehension. He jumped to his feet. Woane looked around half-truculently, but Pardero's glance slid past him. Woane nevertheless

saw or felt something sufficiently eerie that his jaw dropped a trifle, and he muttered to his friends. All watched as Pardero crossed to the door and went out into the night.

Pardero stood on the porch. Floodlights cast a wan glow across the compound, now empty and desolate, inhabited only by the wind from the moors. Pardero stepped off the porch into the shadows. With no purpose he walked around the edge of the compound and out upon the moor; the camp became an illuminated island behind him.

Under the overcast, darkness was complete. Pardero felt an enlargement of the soul, an intoxication of power, as if he were an elemental born of the darkness, knowing no fear . . . He stopped short. His legs felt hard and strong; his hands tingled with competence. Gaswin Camp lay a half-mile behind him, the single visible object. Pardero took a deep throbbing breath, and again examined his consciousness, half-hoping, half-fearful of what he might find.

Nothing. Recollection extended to the Carfaunge space-port. Events before were like voices remembered from a dream. Why was he here at Gaswin? To earn money. How long must he remain? He had forgotten, or perhaps the words had not registered. Pardero began to feel a suffocating agitation, a claustrophobia of the intellect. He lay down on

the moor, beat his forehead, cried out in frustration.

Time passed. Pardero rose to his knees, gained his feet and slowly returned to the camp.

A WEEK LATER Pardero learned of the camp doctor and his function. The next morning, during sick call, he presented himself to the dispensary. A dozen men sat on the benches while the doctor, a young man fresh from medical school, summoned them forward, one at a time. The complaints, either real, imaginary, or contrived, were usually related to the work: back-ache, allergic reaction, congestion of the lungs, an infected lychbug sting. The doctor, young in years but already old in guile, sorted out the real from the fictitious, prescribing remedies for the first and irritant salves or vile-flavored medicines for the second.

Pardero was signaled to the desk and the doctor looked him up and down. "What's wrong with you?"

"I can't remember anything."

"Indeed." The doctor leaned back in his chair. "What is your name?"

"I don't know. Here at the camp they call me Pardero. Can you help me?"

"Probably not. Go back to the bench and let me finish up the sick call; it'll be just a few minutes."

The doctor dealt with his remaining patients and returned to

Pardero. "Tell me how far back you remember."

"I arrived at Carfaunge. I remember a space-ship. I remember the depot—but nothing before."

"Nothing whatever?"

"Nothing."

"Do you remember things you like, or dislike? Are you afraid of anything?"

"No."

"Amnesia typically derives from a subconscious intent to block out intolerable memories."

Pardero gave his head a dubious shake. "I don't think this is likely."

The doctor, both intrigued and bemused, uttered an uneasy half-embarrassed laugh. "Since you can't remember the circumstances, you aren't in a position to judge."

"I suppose that's true . . . Could something be wrong with my brain?"

"You mean physical damage? Do you have headaches or head pains? Any sensation of numbness or pressure?"

"No."

"Well, it's hardly likely a tumor would cause you general amnesia in any event . . . Let me check my references . . . He read for a few moments. "I could try hypnotherapy or shock. Candidly, I don't think I'd do you any good. Amnesia generally cures itself if left alone."

"I don't think I can cure myself. Something lies on my brain like a blanket. It suffocates me. I can't

tear it loose. Can't you help me?"

There was a simplicity to Pardero's manner which appealed to the doctor. He also sensed strangeness: tragedy and drama beyond his conjecture. The man Pardero was fey.

"I would help you if I could," said the doctor. "With all my soul I would help you. But I wouldn't know what I should be doing. I'm not qualified to experiment on you."

"The police officer told me to go to the Connatic's Hospital on Numenes."

"Yes, of course. This is best for you; I was about to suggest it myself."

"Where is Numenes? How do I go there?"

"You must go by starship. The fare is a little over two hundred ozols. That is what I have been told. You earn three and a half ozols a day—more if you exceed your quota. When you have two hundred and fifty ozols, go to Numenes. That is my best advice."

Chapter 2

PARDERO WORKED with single-minded energy. Without fail he collected a half measure over his quota, and sometimes a total of two measures, which first excited jocular comment among his fellow-workers, then sardonic sneers, and finally a cold, if covert, hostility. To compound his offenses Pardero refused to par-

ticipate in the social activities of the camp, except to sit staring into the television screen, and thereby was credited with assumptions of superiority, which was indeed the case. He spent nothing at the commissary; despite all persuasions he refused to gamble, although occasionally he watched the games with a grim smile, which made certain of the players uneasy. Twice his locker was ransacked by someone who hoped to avail himself of Pardero's earnings, but Pardero had drawn no money from his account. Woane made one or two half-hearted attempts at intimidation, then decided to chastise the haughty Pardero, but encountered such ferocious retaliation that he was glad to regain the sanctuary of the mess-hall; and thereafter Pardero was strictly ignored.

At no time could Pardero detect any seepage through the barrier between his memory and his conscious mind. Always as he worked he wondered: "What kind of man am I? Where is my home? What do I know? Who are my friends? Who has committed this wrong upon me?" He expended his frustration on the coluroid creeper and became known as a man possessed by an inner demon, to be avoided as carefully as possible.

For his part Pardero banished Gaswin to the most remote corner of his mind; he would take away as few memories as possible. The work he found tolerable; he resented the name 'Pardero'; to use

a stranger's name was almost like wearing a stranger's clothes: not a fastidious act. Still the name served as well as any other; it was a minor annoyance.

More urgently unpleasant was the lack of privacy. He found detestable the close intimacy of three hundred other men, most especially at mealtimes, when he sat with his eyes fixed on his plate, to avoid the open maws, the mounds of food, the mastication. Impossible to ignore, however, were the belches, grunts, hisses and sighs of satiety. Surely this was not the life he had known in the past! What then had been his life?

The question produced only blankness, a void of information. Somewhere lived a person who had launched him across the Cluster, with his hair hacked short and as denuded of identification as an egg. Sometimes when he pondered this enemy he seemed to hear wisps of possibly imaginary sound: echos of what might have been laughter, but when he poised his head to listen, the pulsations became still.

The onset of darkness continued to trouble him. Often he felt urged to go forth into the dark—an impulse which he resisted, partly from fatigue, partly from a dread of abnormality. He reported his nocturnal restlessness to the camp doctor, who agreed that the tendency should be discouraged, at least until the source was known. The doctor commended Pardero

for his industry, and advised the accumulation of at least two hundred and seventy-five ozols before departure, to allow for incidental expenses.

When Pardero's account reached two hundred and seventy-five ozols, he claimed his money from the bursar, and now, no longer an indigent, he was free to pursue his own destiny. He took a rather mournful leave of the doctor, whom he had come to like and respect, and boarded the transport for Carfaunge. He left Gaswin with a twinge of regret. He had known little pleasure here; still the place had given him refuge. He barely remembered Carfaunge, and the space-port was no more than the recollection of a dream.

He saw nothing of Superintendent Mergan, but was recognized by Dinster the night porter, just coming on duty.

The *Ectobant* of the Prydania Line took Pardero to Baruilla, on Deulle, Alastor 2121, where he transferred to the *Lusimar* of the Gaean Trunk Line, and so was conveyed to Calypso Junction on Imber, and thence by the *Wispen Argent* to Numenes.

Pardero enjoyed the voyage: the multifarious sensations, incidents and vistas amazed him. He had not imagined the variety of the Cluster: the comings and goings, the flux of faces, the gowns, robes, hats, ornaments and bijouterie; the colors and lights and strains of strange music; the bab-

ble of voices; haunting glimpses of beautiful girls; drama, excitement, pathos; objects, faces, sounds, surprises. Could he have known all this and forgotten?

So far Pardero had not indulged in self-pity and his enemy had seemed a baleful abstraction. But how great and how callous the crime which had been performed upon him! He had been isolated from home, friends, sympathy, security; he had been rendered a neuter; his personality had been murdered.

Murder!

The word chilled his blood; he squirmed and winced. And from somewhere, from far distant, came the ghost of a sound: gusts of mocking laughter.

Approaching Numenes, the *Wispen Argent* frist passed by Blazon, the next world out in orbit, to be cleared for landing by the Whelm: a precaution to minimize the danger of an attack from space upon the Connatic's Palace. Having secured clearance, the *Wispen Argent* proceeded; Numenes slowly expanded.

At a distance of about three thousand miles occurred that peculiar referential displacement; instead of hanging off to the side, a destination across the void, Numenes became the world below, upon which the *Wispen Argent* descended: a brilliant panorama of white clouds, blue air, sparkling seas, green islands.

The Central Space-port at Commarice occupied an area

three miles in diameter, surrounded by a fringe of the tall jacinth palms which were a feature of every Numenes landscape, and the usual space-port offices, built in that low airy style also typical of Numenes.

Alighting from the *Wispen Argent* Pardero rode a slideway to the terminal, where he sought information in regard to the Connatic's Hospital. He was referred first to the Traveler's Aid Station, thence to an office at the side of the terminal, where he was presented to a tall spare woman of indeterminate age in a white and blue uniform. She gave Pardero a laconic greeting. "I am Matron Gundal. I understand that you wish to be admitted to the Connatic's Hospital?"

"Yes."

Matron Gundal touched buttons, evidently to activate a recording mechanism. "Your name?"

"I am called Pardero. I do not know my true name."

Matron Gundal made no comment. "Place of origin?"

"I don't know."

"Your complaint?"

"Amnesia."

Matron Gundal gave him a noncommittal inspection, which perhaps indicated interest. "What about your physical health?"

"It seems to be good."

"An orderly will conduct you to the hospital." Matron Gundal raised her voice. "Ariel."

A blonde young woman entered

the room, her uniform somewhat a discord with her sunny good looks. Matron Gundal gave her directions: "Please conduct this gentleman to the Connatic's Hospital." To Pardero: "Have you luggage?"

"No."

"I wish you a quick recovery."

The orderly smiled politely at Pardero. "This way, please."

An air cab slid them northward across the blue and green landscape of Flor Solana, with Ariel maintaining an easy flow of conversation. "Have you visited Numenes before?"

"I don't know; I don't remember anything earlier than the last two or three months."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear this!" said Ariel in confusion. "Well, in case you don't know, there are no real continents here on Numenes, just islands. Everybody who lives here owns a boat."

"That seems very pleasant."

Ariel gingerly touched upon Pardero's disability, watching sidelong to see if he evinced sensitivity or discomfort. "What a strange sensation not to know yourself! How does it feel?"

Pardero considered a moment. "Well—it doesn't hurt."

"I'm relieved to hear that! Think: you might be almost anyone—perhaps rich and important!"

"More likely I'm someone very ordinary: a road-mender, or a wandering dog-barber."

"I'm sure not!" declared Ariel.

"You seem—well—" she hesitated, then continued with a half-embarrassed laugh "—a very confident and intelligent person."

"I hope you are right." Pardero looked at her and sighed, wistful that her fresh blonde charm must so soon pass from his life. "What will they do with me?"

"Nothing alarming. Your case will be studied by very clever persons using the most elaborate mechanisms. Almost certainly you will be cured."

Pardero felt a pang of uneasiness. "It's quite a gamble. I might easily be someone I don't want to be."

Ariel could not restrain a grin. "As I understand it, this is the reason persons become amnesiac in the first place."

Pardero made a glum sound. "Aren't you alarmed, riding with a man who likely is a shameful criminal?"

"I'm paid to be brave. I escort persons much more alarming than you."

Pardero looked out across Flor Solana Island. Ahead he saw a pavilion constructed of pale ribs and translucent panels, whose complexity was obscured behind jacinth palms and cinniborines.

As the air cab approached six domes became evident, with wings radiating in six directions. Pardero asked: "Is this the hospital?"

"The hospital is everything you see. The Hexad is the the computational center. The smaller

buildings are laboratories and surgeries. Patients are housed in the wings. That will be your home until you are restored to health."

Pardero asked diffidently: "And what of you? Will I see you again?"

Ariel's dimples deepened. "Do you want to?"

Pardero soberly considered the range of his inclinations. "Yes."

Ariel said half-teasingly: "You'll be so preoccupied that you'll forget all about me."

"I never want to forget anything again."

Ariel chewed her lip thoughtfully. "You remember nothing of your past life?"

"Nothing."

"Maybe you have a family: someone who loves you, and children."

"I suppose this is possible . . . Somehow I suspect otherwise."

"Most men seem to suspect otherwise . . . Well, I'll have to think about it."

The air cab landed; the two alighted and walked along a tree-shaded avenue toward the Hexad. Ariel glanced at him sidewise, and perhaps his obvious foreboding excited her compassion. She said in a voice which she intended to be cheerful but impersonal: "I'm out here often and as soon as you've started your treatments I'll come to see you."

Pardero smiled wanly. "I'll look forward to the occasion."

She conducted him to the reception area, and spoke a few

words to an official, then took her leave. "Don't forget!" she called over her shoulder, and the impersonality, intentionally or not, was gone from her voice. "I'll see you soon!"

"I AM O. T. Kolodin," said a large rather rumpled man with an over-size nose and sparse untidy dark hair. "'O.T.' means 'Ordinary Technician'; just call me Kolodin. You're on my list, so we'll be seeing something of each other. Come along; I'll get you settled."

Pardero bathed, submitted to a physical examination, and was issued a pale blue lightweight suit. Kolodin showed him to his chamber along one of the wings, and the two took a meal on a nearby terrace. Kolodin, not too much older than Pardero but incalculably more sophisticated, took a lively interest in Pardero's condition. "I've never come in contact with such a case before. Fascinating! It's almost a shame to cure you!"

Pardero managed a wry smile. "I have doubts of my own. I'm told that I can't remember because of something I want to forget. I might not like being cured."

"It is a difficult position," Kolodin agreed. "Still, affairs may not be so bad after all." He glanced at his thumb-nail, which responded with a set of glowing numbers. "In fifteen minutes we'll meet with M. T. Rady, who will decide

upon your therapy."

The two returned to the Hexad. Kolodin ushered Pardero into the office of Master Technician Rady, and a moment later Rady himself appeared: a thin sharp-eyed man of middle age who already seemed to know the data relevant to Pardero's case. He asked: "The space-ship which brought you to Bruse-Tansel: how was it named?"

"I can't remember much about it."

Rady nodded and touched a square of coarse sponge to each of Pardero's shoulders. "This is an inoculation to facilitate a relaxed mind-state . . . Relax back into your chair. Can you fix your mind upon something pleasant?"

The room dimmed; Pardero thought of Ariel. Rady said: "On the wall you will see a pair of designs. I want you to examine them, or if you prefer, you may close your eyes and rest . . . In fact, relax completely, and listen only to my voice; and when I tell you to sleep, then you may sleep."

The designs on the wall pulsed and swam; a soft sound, waxing and waning, seemed to absorb and obliterate all other sounds of the universe. The shapes on the wall had expanded to surround him, and the only reality was himself and his inner mind.

"I don't know." The voice sounded as if it were coming from a distant room, although it was his own voice. Odd. He heard a mumble whose significance he

only half-needed: "What was your father's name?"

"I don't know."

"What was your mother's name?"

"I don't know."

More questions, sometimes casual, sometimes urgent, and always the same response, and finally the cessation of sound.

Pardero awoke in an empty office. Almost immediately Rady returned, to stand looking down at Pardero with a faint smile.

Pardero asked: "What did you learn?"

"Nothing to speak of. How do you feel?"

"Tired."

"Quite normal. For the rest of the day, rest. Don't worry about your condition; somehow we'll get to the bottom of your case."

"Suppose there's nothing there? Suppose I have no memory?"

Rady refused to take the idea seriously. "Every cell in your body has a memory. Your mind stores facts on many levels. For instance you have not forgotten how to speak."

Pardero said dubiously: "When I arrived at Carfaunge, I knew very little. I could not talk. As soon as I heard a word I remembered its meaning and I could use it."

Rady gave a curt nod. "This is the basis of a technique we might try again."

Pardero hesitated. "I might find my memory and discover myself to be a criminal."

Rady's eyes gleamed. "That is a chance you must take. The Connatic, after restoring your memory, might then decide to put you to death."

Pardero grimaced. "Does the Connatic ever visit the hospital?"

"Undoubtedly. He goes everywhere."

"What does he look like?"

Rady shrugged. "In his official photographs he seems an important and imposing nobleman, because of his dress and accoutrements. But when he walks abroad, he goes quietly and is never recognized, and this is what he likes best. Four trillion folk inhabit Alastor Cluster, and it is said that the Connatic knows what each of them eats for breakfast."

"In that case," said Pardero, "perhaps I should simply go to ask the Connatic for the facts of my life."

"It might come to that."

THE DAYS PASSED, and then a week, and then two weeks. Rady attempted a dozen stratagems to loosen the blocked linkages in Pardero's mind. He recorded responses to a gamut of stimulations: colors, sounds, odors, tastes, textures; heights and depths; lights and degrees of darkness. On a more complex level he charted Pardero's reactions, overt, physiological and cephalic, to absurdities and festivals, erotic conditions, cruelties and horrors, the faces of men, women and children. A computa-

tional mechanism assimilated the results of the tests, compared them to known parameters and synthesized an analogue of Pardero's psyche.

Rady, when he finally assessed the results of his tests, found little enlightenment. "Your basic reflexes are ordinary enough; one anomaly is your reaction to darkness, by which you seem to be curiously stimulated. Your social perceptivity seems underdeveloped, for which the amnesia may be to blame. You appear to be assertive rather than retiring; your response to music is minimal and color symbology has little meaning for you—possibly by reason of your amnesia. Odors stimulate you rather more than I might expect—but to no significant degree." Rady leaned back in his chair. "These tests might easily provoke some sort of conscious response: have you noticed anything whatever?"

"Nothing."

Rady nodded. "Very well. We will try a new tack. The theoretical basis is this: if your amnesia has resulted from circumstances which you are determined to forget, we can dissolve the amnesia by bringing these events to your conscious attention again. In order to do this, we must learn the nature of the traumatic circumstances. In short we must learn your identity and home environment."

Pardero frowned and looked out the window. Rady watched in-

tently. "You don't care to learn your identity?"

Pardero gave him a crooked smile. "I did not say so."

Rady shrugged. "The choice is yours. You can walk out of here at any time. The Social Service will find you employment and you can start a new life."

Pardero shook his head. "I could never evade the pressure. Perhaps there are people who need me, who now grieve for me."

Rady said only: "Tomorrow we'll start the detective work."

AN HOUR AFTER TWILIGHT Pardero met Ariel at a cafe and reported the events of the day. "Rady admitted bafflement," said Pardero, with something like gloomy satisfaction. "Not in so many words of course. He also said that the only way to learn where I came from was to find out where I lived. In short, he wants to send me home. First we must find home. The detective work starts tomorrow."

Ariel nodded thoughtfully. Tonight she was not her usual self; in fact, thought Pardero, she seemed strained and preoccupied. He reached out to touch her soft blonde hair, but she drew back.

"And then?" she asked.

"Nothing much. He told me that if I were reluctant to proceed, now was the time to make a decision."

"And what did you say?"

"I told him that I had to go on,

that perhaps somewhere people searched for me."

Ariel's blue eyes darkened sorrowfully. "I cannot see you any more, Padero."

"Oh? Why not?"

"For just the reasons you cited. Amnesiacs always wander away from their homes and then—well, form new attachments. Then their memory returns and the situation ends in tragedy." Ariel rose to her feet. "I'll say goodbye now, before I change my mind." She touched his hand, then walked away from the table. Padero watched her diminish down the avenue. He made no move to stop her.

INSTEAD OF ONE DAY, three days passed before O.T. Kolodin sought out Padero. "Today we visit the Connatic's Palace and explore the Ring of Worlds."

"I'll enjoy the excursion. But why?"

"I've been looking into your past, and it turns out to be a hopeless tangle; or, more properly, a blur of uncertainties."

"I could have told you that myself."

"No doubt, but one must never take anything for granted. The facts, duly certified, are these. Sometime on 9 Mariel Gaean you appeared at Carfaunge Spaceport. This was an unusually busy day and you might have arrived aboard any of six ships of four different transport lines. The previous routes of these ships took

them to a total of twenty-eight worlds, any of which might be your place of origin. Nine of these worlds are important junctions and it is possible that you made your voyage by two or even three stages. Amnesia would not be an insuperable objection. Stewards and depot personnel, taking you for a lackwit, would consult your ticket and shift you from ship to ship. In any case the number of worlds, depots, ships and possible linkages becomes unmanageable. Or at least an inquiry of last resort. First we will visit the Connatic! Though I doubt if he will receive us personally."

"Too bad! I would like to pay my respects."

They rode by air-cab across Flor Solana to Moniscq, a town beside the sea, thence under the ocean of Equatorial Storms by submarine tunnel to Tremone Island. An air-bus flew them south, and presently the Connatic's so-called 'palace' became visible, appearing first as a fragile shine, an unsubstantial glimmer in the air, which solidified into a tower of stupendous dimensions, standing upon five pylons, footed upon five islands. A thousand feet above the sea the pylons joined and flared, creating a dome of five groins, the underside of the first deck. Above rose the tower, up through the lower air, up through the sunny upper air, through a wisp of cirrus to terminate in the high sunlight. Kolodin asked casually: "Have you such towers on your

home-world*?"

Pardero glanced at him skeptically. "Are you trying to trick me? If I knew this, I wouldn't be here." He returned to contemplation of the tower. "And where does the Connatic live?"

"He has apartments at the pinnacle. Perhaps he stands up there now, by one of his windows. Again, perhaps not. It is never certain; after all, dissidents, rogues and rebels are not unknown to Alastor, and precautions are in order. Suppose, for example, that an assassin were sent to Numenes in the guise of an amnesiac, or perhaps as an amnesiac with horrid instructions latent in his mind."

"I have no weapons," said Pardero. "I am no assassin. The very thought causes me to shudder."

"I must make a note of this. I believe that your psychometry also showed an aversion to murder. Well, if you are an assassin, the plan will not succeed, as I doubt if we shall see the Connatic today."

"Who then will we be seeing?"

"A certain demosophist named Ollave, who has access to the data banks and the collating machinery. Quite possibly we will today learn the name of your home-world."

Pardero gave the matter his usual careful consideration. "And then what will happen to me?"

*A drab translation of the word *geisling*, which carries warmer and dearer connotations.

"Well," said Kolodin cautiously, "three options at least are open. You can continue therapy at the hospital, although I fear that Rady is discouraged. You can accept your condition and attempt a new life. You can return to your home-world."

Pardero made no comment, and Kolodin delicately forebore to put any further questions.

A slideway conveyed them to the base of the near pylon, from which perspective the tower's proportions could no longer be sensibly discerned, and only the sensation of overwhelming mass and transcendent engineering remained.

The two ascended in an elevator bubble; the sea, the shore and Tremone Island dropped below.

"The first three decks and the six lower promenades are reserved for the use and pleasure of tourists. Here they may wander for days enjoying simple relaxation or, at choice, exotic entertainments. They may sleep without charge in simple chambers, although luxurious apartments are available at nominal expense. They may dine upon familiar staples or they may test every reputable cuisine of the Cluster and elsewhere, again at minimal cost. Travelers come and go by the millions; such is the Connatic's wish . . . Now we pass the administrative decks, which house the government agencies and the offices of the Twenty-

Four Agents . . . Now we pass the Ring of Worlds, and up to the College of Anthropological Sciences, and here is our destination. Ollave is a man most knowledgeable and if anything can be learned he will learn it.

They stepped forth into a lobby tiled in blue and white. Kolodin spoke the name 'Ollave' toward a black disk and presently Ollave appeared: a man of undistinguished appearance, his face sallow and pensive, with a long thin nose and black hair receding from a narrow forehead. He greeted Kolodin and Pardero in a voice unexpectedly heavy, took them into a sparsely furnished office. Pardero and Kolodin sat in chairs and Ollave settled behind his desk. Ollave addressed Pardero: "As I understand the situation, you remember nothing of your early life."

"This is true."

"I cannot give you your memory," said Ollave, "but if you are native to Alastor Cluster, I should be able to determine your world of origin, perhaps the precise locality of your home district."

"How will you do that?"

Ollave indicated his desk. "I have on record your anthropometry, physiological indices, details as to your somatic chemistry, psychic profile—in fact all the information Technicians Rady and Kolodin have been able to adduce. Perhaps you are aware that residence upon any particular world in any specific society, and

participation in any way of life leaves traces, mental and physical. These traces unfortunately are not absolutely specific, and some are too subtle to be reliably measured. For instance, if you are characterized by blood type RC3, it is then unlikely that your home-world is Azulias. Your intestinal bacteria furnish clues, as does the musculature of your legs, the chemical composition of your hair, the presence and nature of any body fungus or internal parasite; the pigments of your skin. If you make use of gestures these may be typified. Other social reflexes such as areas and degrees of personal modesty are also indicative, but these require long and patient observation and again may be obscured by the amnesia. Dentition and dental repairs sometimes offer a clue, as does hair styling. So now: do you understand the process? Those parameters to which we can assign numerical weights are processed in a computer, which will then present us a list of places in descending order of probability.

"We will prepare two other such lists. To those worlds most convenient to Carfaunge Spaceport we will assign probability factors, and we will try to codify your cultural reflexes: a complex undertaking, as the amnesia no doubt has muted much of this data, and you have in the meantime acquired a set of new habits. Still, if you will step into the laboratory, we will try to make a

reading."

In the laboratory Ollave sat Pardero in a massive chair, fitted receptors to various parts of his body and adjusted a battery of contacts to his head. Over Pardero's eyes he placed optical hemispheres and clamped ear-phones to his ears.

"First we establish your sensitivity to archetypal concepts. Amnesia may well dampen or distort the responses, and according to M. T. Rady yours is an extraordinary case. Still, if the cerebellum only is occluded other areas of the nervous system will provide information. If we get any signals whatever, we will assume that their relative strength has remained constant. The recent overlay we will try to screen out. You are to do nothing, merely sit quiet; attempt neither to feel nor not to feel; your internal faculties will provide us all we want to know." He closed the hemispheres over Pardero's eyes. "First, a set of elemental concepts."

To Pardero's eyes and ears were presented scenes and sounds: a sunlit forest, surf breaking upon a beach, a meadow sprinkled with flowers, a mountain valley roaring to a winter storm; a sunset, a starry night, a view over a calm ocean, a city street, a road winding over placid hills, a space-ship.

"Now another series," came Ollave's voice. Pardero saw a campfire surrounded by shadowy figures, a beautiful nude maiden,

a corpse dangling from a gibbet, a warrior in black steel armor galloping on a horse, a parade of harlequins and clowns, a sailboat plunging through the waves, three old ladies sitting on a bench.

"Next, musics."

A series of musical sounds entered Pardero's ears: a pair of chords, several orchestral essays, a fanfare, the music of a harp, a jig and a merrydown.

"Now faces."

A stern and grizzled man stared at Pardero, a child, a middle-aged woman, a girl, a face twisted into a sneer, a boy laughing, a man in pain, a woman weeping.

"Vehicles."

Pardero saw boats, chariots, land-vehicles, air-craft, space-ships.

"The body."

Pardero saw a hand, a face, a tongue, a nose, an abdomen, male and female genital organs, an eye, an open mouth, buttocks, a foot.

"Places."

A cabin beside a lake, a palace of a dozen domes and cupolas in a garden, a wooden hut, an urban tenement, a houseboat, a temple, a laboratory, the mouth of a cave.

"Objects."

A sword, a tree, a coil of rope, a mountain crag, an energy gun, a plow with a shovel and hoe, an official proclamation with a red seal, flowers in a vase, books on a shelf, an open book on a lectern, carpenter's tools, a selection of musical instruments, mathematical adjuncts, a retort, a whip, an en-

gine, an embroidered pillow, a set of maps and charts, draughting instruments and blank paper.

"Abstract symbols."

Patterns appeared before Pardero's vision: combinations of lines, geometrical shapes, numbers, linguistic characters, a clenched fist, a pointing finger, a foot with small wings growing from the ankles.

"And finally—" Pardero saw himself—from a distance, then close at hand. He looked into his own face.

Ollave removed the apparatus. "The signals were extremely faint but perceptible. We have recorded your psychometrics and now can establish your so-called 'cultural index'."

"What have you learned?"

Ollave gave Pardero a rather queer look. "Your reactions are inconsistent, to use an understatement. You would seem to derive from a most remarkable society. You fear the dark, yet it challenges and exalts you. You fear women; you are made uneasy by the female body; still the concept of femininity tantalizes you. You respond positively to martial tactics, heroic encounters, weapons and uniforms; on the other hand you abhor violence and pain. Your other reactions are equally contradictory. The question becomes, 'Do all these strange responses form a pattern, or do they indicate derangement?' I will not speculate. The data has been fed into an integrator together with

the other material I mentioned. No doubt the report is ready for us."

"I am almost afraid to examine it," murmured Pardero. "I would seem to be unique."

Ollave made no further comment; they returned to the office, where O. T. Kolodin waited patiently. From a register Ollave drew forth a square of white paper. "Here is our report." In a manner perhaps unconsciously dramatic he studied the print-out. "A pattern has appeared." He read the sheet again. Ah yes . . . Eighteen localities on five worlds are identified. The probabilities for four of these worlds, with seventeen of the localities, aggregate three percent. The probability for the single locality on the fifth world is rated at eighty-nine percent, which under the circumstances is equivalent to near-certainty. In my opinion, Master Pardero, or whatever your name, you are a Rhune from the Rhune Realms, east of Port Mar on the North Continent of Marune, Alastor 933."

Chapter 3

IN THE BLUE- and white-tiled lobby Kolodin asked Pardero: "Well—so you are a Rhune. What then? Do you recognize the word?"

"Not at all."

"I suspected not."

Ollave joined them. "Let's go acquaint ourselves with this world

of yours. The Ring is directly below; Chamber 933 will be on Level Five. To the descensor!"

As the bubble dropped them down the levels Kolodin dis-coursed upon the Ring of Worlds. "—one of the few areas controlled by entrance permit. Not so in the early days. Anyone might visit his world's chamber and there perform whatever nuisance entered his head, such as writing his name on the wall, or inserting a pin into the globe at the site of his home, or altering the lineage of local nobility, or placing scurrilous reports into the records. As a result we must now declare ourselves."

"Luckily my credentials will facilitate the matter," said Ollave drily.

The formalities accomplished, an attendant took them to that portal numbered 933 and allowed them admittance.

In the center of the chamber a globe ten feet in diameter floated close above the floor, rotating easily to the touch. "And there you see Marune," said Kolodin. "Does it appear familiar? . . . As I expected."

Ollave touched the globe. "A small dense world of no great population. The color gradients represent relief; Marune is a most rugged world. Notice these peaks and chasms! The olive green areas are polar tundra; the smooth blue metal is open water: not a great deal, relatively speaking. Note too these vast equatorial bogs! Certainly there is little habitable

land." He touched a button; the globe sparkled with small pink light-points. "There you see the population distribution: Port Mar seems to be the largest city . . . But feel free to look around the chamber; perhaps you will see something to stimulate your memory."

Pardero moved here and there, studying the exhibits, charts and cases with only tentative interest. Presently he asked in a rather hollow voice: "How far is this planet?"

Kolodin took him to a three-dimensional representation of Alastor Cluster. "Here we are on Numenes, beside this yellow star." He touched a button, a red indicator blinked, near the side of the display. "There is Marune, almost at the Cold Edge, in the Fontinella Wisp. Bruse-Tansel is somewhere about there, where those grid lines come together." He moved to another display. "This represents the local environment: a four-star group. Marune is—" he touched a button "—at the end of the red arrow, orbiting close around the orange dwarf Furad. The green star is Cirse, the blue dwarf is Osmo, the red dwarf is Maddar. A spectacular location for a planet, among such a frolic of stars! Maddar and Cirse swing close around each other; Furad, with Marune keepings its monthly orbit, curvets around Osmo; the four stars dance fine saraband down the Fontinella Wisp." Kolodin read

from a placard on the wall. " 'On Marune day and night do not alternate as is the case with the generality of planets. Instead, there are varying conditions of light, depending upon which sun or suns rule the sky, and these periods are designated by a specific nomenclature. Aud, isp, red rowan, green rowan and umber are the ordinary gradations. Night occurs at intervals regulated by a complex pattern, on the average about once every thirty days.

" 'Most of Marune is poorly adapted to human habitation and the population is small, divided about equally between agriculturists of the lowland slopes and residents of the several cities, of which Port Mar is by far the most important. East of Port Mar are the Mountain Realms, inhabited by those aloof and eccentric warrior-scholars known as Rhunes, whose numbers are not accurately known. The native fauna includes a quasi-intelligent biped of placid disposition: the Fwai-chi. These creatures inhabit highland forests and are protected from molestation both by statute and by local custom. For more detailed information, consult the catalogue.' "

Pardero went to the globe and presently discovered Port Mar. To the east rose a succession of enormous mountain ranges, the high crags rising past the timber line, up past snow and glaciers, into regions where rain and snowfall no longer existed. A multitude

of small rivers drained the region, wandering along narrow upland valleys, expanding to become lakes, pouring over precipices to reconstitute themselves in new lakes or new streams below. Certain of the valleys were named: Haun, Gorgetto, Zangloreis, Eccord, Wintaree, Disbague, Morluke, Tuillin, Scharrode, Ronduce, a dozen others, all sounding of an odd or archaic dialect. Some of the names lay easy on his tongue, as if he well knew their proper pronunciation, and when Kolodin, peering over his shoulder, read them off, he noticed the faulty inflections, though he told Kolodin nothing of this.

Ollave called him and indicated a tall glass case. "What do you think of this?"

"Who are they?"

"An eiodarkal trismet."

"Those words mean nothing to me."

"They are Rhune terms, of course; I thought you might recognize them. An 'eiodark' is a high-ranking baron; 'trisme' is an institution analogous to marriage. 'Trismet' designates the people involved."

Pardero inspected the two figures. Both were represented to be tall, spare, dark-haired and fair of complexion. The man wore a complicated costume of dark red cloth, a vest of black metal strips, a ceremonial helmet contrived of black metal and black fabric. The woman wore garments somewhat simpler: a long shapeless gown of

gray gauze, white slippers, a loose black cap which framed the white starkly modeled features.

"Typical Rhunes," said Ollave. "They totally reject cosmopolitan standards and styles. Notice them as they stand there. Observe the cool and dispassionate expressions. Notice also, their garments have no elements in common, a clear signal that in the Rhune society male and female roles differ. Each is a mystery to the other; they might be members of different races!" He glanced sharply at Pardero. "Do they suggest anything to you?"

"They are not strange, no more than the language was strange at Carfaunge."

"Just so." Crossing the chamber to a projection screen, Ollave touched buttons. "Here is Port Mar, on the edge of the highlands."

A voice from the screen supplied a commentary to the scene. "You view the city Port Mar, as you might from an air-car approaching from the south. The time is aud, which is to say, full daylight, with Furad, Maddar, Osmo and Cirse in the sky."

The screen displayed a panorama of small residences half-concealed by foliage: structures built of dark timber and pink-tan stucco. The roofs rose at steep pitches, joining in all manner of irregular angles and eccentric gables: a style quaint and unusual. In many cases the houses had been extended and enlarged, the additions grow-

ing casually from the old structures like crystals growing from crystals. Other structures, abandoned, had fallen into ruins. "These houses were built by Majars, the original inhabitants of Marune. Very few pure-blooded Majars remain; the race is almost extinct, and Majartown is falling into disuse. The Majars, with the Rhunes, named the planet, which originally was known as 'Majar-Rhune'. The Rhunes, arriving upon Marune, decimated the Majars, but were expelled by the Whelm into the eastern mountains, where to this day they are allowed no weapons of energy or attack."

The angle of view shifted to a hostelry of stately proportions. The commentator spoke: "Here you see the Royal Rhune Hotel, invariably patronized by those Rhunes who must visit Port Mar. The management is attentive to the special and particular Rhune needs."

The view shifted across a river to a district somewhat more modern. "You now observe the New Town," said the commentator. "The Port Mar College of Arts and Technics, situated nearby, claims a distinguished faculty and almost ten thousand students, deriving both from Port Mar and from the agricultural tracts to the south and west. There are no Rhunes in attendance at the college."

Pardero asked Ollave, "And why is that?"

"The Rhunes prefer their own educational processes."

"They seem an unusual people."

"In many respects."

"And I am one of these remarkable persons."

"So it would seem. Let us look into the Mountain Realms." Ollave consulted an index. "First I'll show you one of the autochthones: the Fwai-chi, as they are called." He touched a button, to reveal a high mountainside patched with snow and sparsely forested with gnarled black trees. The view expanded toward one of these trees, to center upon the rugose brown-black trunk, which stirred and moved. Away from the tree shambled a bulky brown-black biped with a loose pelt, all shags and tatters. The commentator spoke: "Here you see a Fwai-chi. These creatures, after their own fashion, are intelligent, and as such they are protected by the Connatic. The shags of its skin are not merely camouflage against the snow bears, they are organs for the production of hormones and the reproductive stimule. Occasionally the Fwai-chi will be seen nibbling each other; they are ingesting a stuff which reacts with a bud on the wall of their stomachs. The bud develops into an infant, which in due course is vomited into the world. Along the trailing fringes of other shags other semi-vital stimules are produced.

"The Fwai-chi are placid, but not helpless if provoked too far;

indeed they are said to possess important parapsychic competence, and no one dares molest them."

The view shifted, down the mountainside to the valley floor. A village of fifty stone houses occupied a meadow beside the river; from a bluff a tall mansion, or castle, overlooked the valley. To Kolodin's eye, the mansion, or castle, evinced an archaic over-elaboration of shape and detail; additionally the proportions appeared cramped, the construction disproportionately heavy, the windows too few, too tall and narrow. He put to Padero a question: "What do you think of this?"

"I don't remember it." Padero raised his hands to his temples, pressed and rubbed. "I feel pressure; I want to see no more."

"Certainly not," declared Ollave jauntily. "We'll go at once." And he added: "Come up to my office; I'll pour you a sedative, and you'll feel less perturbation."

RETURNING to the Connatic's Hospital, Padero sat silently for most of the trip. At last he asked Kolodin: "How soon can I go to Marune?"

"Whenever you like," said Kolodin, and then added, in the tentative voice of a person hoping to persuade a captious child: "But why hurry? Is the hospital so dreary? Take a few weeks to study and learn, and to make some careful plans."

"I want to learn two names: my own and that of my enemy."

Kolodin blinked. He had miscalculated the intensity of Pardero's emotions. "Perhaps no enemy exists," stated Kolodin somewhat ponderously. "He is not absolutely necessary to your condition."

Pardero managed a small sour smile. "When I arrived at the Carfaunge space-port, my hair had been hacked short. I considered it a mystery until I saw the simulated Rhune eidark. Did you notice his hair?"

"It was combed straight over the scalp and down across the neck."

"And this is a distinctive style?"

"Well—it's hardly common, though not bizarre or unique. It is distinctive enough to facilitate identification."

Pardero nodded gloomily. "My enemy intended that no one should identify me as a Rhune. He cut my hair, dressed me in a clown's suit, then put me on a space-ship and sent me across the Cluster, hoping I would never return."

"So it would seem. Still, why did he not simply kill you and roll you into a ditch? How much more decisive!"

"Rhunes fear killing, except in war: this I have learned from Ol-lave."

Kolodin surreptitiously studied Pardero who sat brooding across the landscape. Remarkable the alteration! In a few hours, from a person uninformed, vague and confused, Pardero had become a

man purposeful and integrated; a man, so Kolodin would guess, of strong passions under stern control, and after all was not this the way of the Rhunes? "For the sake of argument, let us assume that this enemy exists," said Kolodin laboriously. "He knows you; you do not know him. You will arrive at Port Mar at a disadvantage, and perhaps at considerable risk."

Pardero seemed almost amused. "So then, must I avoid Port Mar? I reckon on this risk; I intend to prepare against it."

"And how will you so prepare?"

"First I want to learn as much as possible about the Rhunes."

"Simple enough," said Kolodin. "The knowledge is in Chamber 933. What next?"

"I have not yet decided."

Sensing evasion, Kolodin pursed his lips. "The Connatic's law is exact: Rhunes are allowed neither energy weapons nor air-vehicles."

Pardero grinned. "I am no Rhune until I learn my identity."

"In a technical sense, this is true," said Kolodin cautiously.

SOMETHING OVER A MONTH later Kolodin accompanied Pardero to the Central Space-port at Com-marice, and out across the field to the *Dylas Extranuator*. The two said goodbye at the embarkation ramp. "I probably will never see you again," said Kolodin, "and much as I would like to know the outcome of your quest, I probably will never learn."

Pardero responded in a flat voice: "I thank you for your help and for your personal kindness."

From a Rhune, thought Kolodin, even an occluded Rhune, this was almost effusiveness. He spoke in a guarded voice: "A month ago you hinted of your need for a weapon. Have you obtained such an item?"

"No," said Pardero. "I thought to wait until I was beyond the range of the Connatic's immediate attention, so to speak."

With furtive glances to left and right Kolodin tucked a small carton in Pardero's pocket. "You now carry a Dys Model G Skull-splitter. Instructions are included

in the package. Don't flourish it about; the laws are explicit. Goodby, good luck, and communicate with me if possible."

"Again, thank you." Pardero clasped Kolodin's shoulders, then turned away and boarded the ship.

Kolodin returned to the terminal and ascended to the observation deck. Half an hour later he watched the black, red and gold space-ship loft into the air, slide off and away from Numenes.

Chapter 4

DURING THE MONTH previous to his departure, Pardero spent many

	Furad	Osmo	Maddar	Cirse
Aud	X	X	X either or both	X
Isp		X	X	X with or without
Chill Isp		X		X with or without
Umber	X		X either or both	X
Lorn Umber	X			
Rowan			X	X
Red Rowan			X	
Green Rowan				X
Mirk				

hours in Chamber 933 along the Ring of Worlds. Kolodin occasionally kept him company; Oswen Ollave, as often, came down from his offices to discuss the perplexing habits of the Rhunes.

Ollave prepared a chart which he insisted that Pardero memorize.

"The chart indicates Marune's ordinary conditions of daylight*, during which the character of the landscape changes profoundly. The population is naturally affected, and most especially the

*These are the modes recognized by the folk of Port Mar. Both the Majars and the Rhunes make more elaborate distinctions.

The progression of the modes is rendered complex by reason of: the diurnal rotation of Marune; the revolution of Marune around Furad; the motion of Furad and Osmo around each other; the orbital motions of Maddar and Cirse, around each other and jointly around the Furad-Osmo system. The planes of no two orbiting systems are alike.

The Fwai-chi, who lack all knowledge of astronomy, can reliably predict the modes for as far in the future as anyone cares to inquire.

Among the low mountains south of Port Mar live a 'lost' community of about ten thousand Majars, decadent, inbred and gradually diminishing in numbers. These folk are slavishly affected by the modes of day. They regulate their moods, diet, attire and activities by the changes. During mirk, the Majars lock themselves in their huts, and by the light of oil lamps chant imprecations against Galula the Goblin who mauls and eviscerates anyone unlucky enough to be abroad after dark. Some such entity as Galula indeed exists, but has

never been satisfactorily identified.

The Rhunes, as proud and competent as the Majars are demoralized, are also strongly affected by the changing modes. Circumstances proper during one mode may be considered absurd or in poor taste during another. Persons advance their erudition and hone their special skills during aud, isp and umber. Formal ceremonies tend to take place during isp, and also the remarkable 'Ceremony of Odors'. It may be noted that music is considered hyper-emotional and inducive to vulgar conduct; it is never heard in the Rhune Realms. Aud is the appropriate time to go forth to battle, to conduct litigation, fight a duel, collect rent. Green Rowan is a time for poetry and sentimental musing; red rowan allows the Rhune slightly to relax his etiquette. A man may condescend to take a glass of wine in company with other men, all using etiquette screens; women similarly may sip cordials or brandy. Chill isp inspires the Rhune with a thrilling ascetic exultation, which completely supersedes lesser emotions of love, hate, jealousy, greed. Conversation occurs in a hushed archaic dialect; brave ventures are planned; gallant resolves sworn; schemes of glory proposed and ratified, and many of these projects become fact, and go into the Book of Deeds.

Rhunes." Ollave's voice had taken on a pedantic suavity, and he enunciated his words with precision. "Port Mar is hardly notable for sophistication; the Rhunes, however, consider Port Mar a most worldly place, characterized by shameless alimentation, slackness, laxity and a kind of bestial lasciviousness to which they apply the term 'sebalism'.

"In the Old Town at Port Mar

live a handful of exiles: young Rhunes who have rebelled against their society, or who have been ejected for lapses of conduct. They are a demoralized, miserable and bitter group; all criticize their parents, who, so they claim, have withheld counsel and guidance. To a certain extent this is true; Rhunes feel that their precepts are self-evident even to the understanding of a child—which of course they are not; nowhere in the Cluster are conventions more arbitrary. For instance, the process of ingesting food is considered as deplorable as the final outcome of digestion, and eating is done as privately as possible. The child is supposed to achieve this viewpoint automatically, as well as other Rhune conventions. He is expected to excel in arcane and impractical skills; he must quell his sebalism."

Pardero stirred restlessly. "You have used this word before; I do not understand it."

"It is the special Rhune concept for 'sexuality', which the Rhunes find disgusting. How then do they procreate? It is cause for wonder. But they have solved the problem with elegance and ingenuity. During mirk, in the dark of the suns, they undergo a remarkable transformation. Do you wish to hear about it? If so, you must allow me a measure of discursiveness, as the subject is most wonderful!

"About once a month, the land grows dark, and the Rhunes become restless. Some lock them-

selves into their homes; others array themselves in odd costumes and go forth into the night where they perform the most astonishing deeds. The baron whose rectitude is unquestioned robs and beats one of his tenants. A staid matron commits daring acts of unmentionable depravity. No one who allows himself to be accesible is safe. What a mystery then! How to reconcile such conduct with the decorum of daylight? No one tries to do so; night-deeds are considered hardships for which no one is held responsible, like night-mares. Mirk is a time of unreality; events during mirk are unreal, and 'guilt' has no basis.

"During mirk, sebalism is rampant. Indeed, sexual activity occurs only as a night-deed, only in the guise of rape. Marriage—'trisme,' as it is called—is never considered a sexual pairing, but rather an alliance: a joining of economic or political forces. Sexual acts, if they occur, will be 'night-deeds'—acts of purported rape. The male participant wears a black garment over his shoulders, arms and upper chest, and boots of black cloth. Over his head he wears a 'man-mask'. His torso is naked. He is purposely grotesque, an abstraction of male sexuality; his costume depersonalizes himself and maximizes the 'fantasy' or 'unreal' elements. The man enters the chamber where the woman sleeps, or pretends to sleep; and in utter silence procreation occurs. Virginity

or its absence is neither significant, nor so much as a subject for speculation; the Rhune dialect contains no such word.

"So there you have the state of 'trisme'. Between trismetics friendship may exist, but the two address each other formally. Intimacy between any two people is rare. Rooms are large, so that folk need not huddle together, nor even approach. No person purposely touches another; in fact the occupations which require physical contact, such as barbering, doctoring, clothes-fitting, are considered pariah trades. For such services the Rhunes journey into Port Mar. A parent neither strikes nor caresses his child; a warrior attempts to kill his enemy at a distance, and weapons such as swords and daggers have only ceremonial function.

"Allow me to revert to the act of eating. On those rare occasions when a Rhune is forced to dine in the company of others he ingests his food behind a napkin, or at the back of a table implement unique to Marune: a screen on a metal pedestal, placed before the diner's face. At formal banquets no food is served: only wafts of varied and complicated odors, the selection and presentation being considered a creative skill.

"The Rhunes lack humor. They are highly sensitive to insult; a Rhune will never submit to ridicule. Lifelong friends must reckon with each other's sensibilities, and rely upon a compli-

cated etiquette to lubricate social occasions. In short, it seems as if the Rhunes deny themselves all the usual human pleasures. What do they substitute?

"In the first place, the Rhune is exquisitely sensitive to his landscapes of mountain, meadow, forest and sky, all changing to the changing modes of day. He reckons his land by its aesthetic appeal; he will connive a lifetime to gain a few choice acres. He enjoys pomp, protocol, heraldic minutiae; his niceties and graces are judged as carefully as the figures of a ballet. He prides himself on his collection of sherliken scales; or the emeralds which he has mined, cut and polished with his own hands; or his Arah magic wheels, imported from halfway across the Gaean Reach. He will perfect himself in special mathematics, or an ancient language, or the lore of fanfares, or all three, or three other abstrusities. His calligraphy and draughtsmanship are taken for granted; his life work is his Book of Deeds, which he executes and illustrates and decorates with fervor and exactitude. A few of these books have reached the market; in the Reach they command enormous prices as curios.

The Rhune is not a likeable man. He is so sensitive as to be truculent: he is contemptuous of all other races than the Rhune. He is self-centered, arrogant, unsympathetic in his judgments.

"Naturally I allude to the typi-

cal Rhune, from whom an individual may deviate, and everything I have said applies no less to the women as the men.

"The Rhunes display correspondingly large virtues: dignity, courage, honor, intellects of incomprehensible complexity—though here again individuals may differ from the norm.

"Anyone who owns land considers himself an aristocrat, and the hierarchy descends from kaiark, through kang, eiodark, baronet, baron, knight and squire. The Fwai-chi have retreated from the Realms, but still make their pilgrimages through the upper forests and along the high places. There is no inter-action between the two races.

"Needless to say, among a people so passionate, proud and reckless, and so anxious to expand their land-holdings, conflict is not unknown. The force of the Connatic's Second Edict and, more effectively, an embargo upon energy weapons, has eliminated formal war, but raids and forays are common, and enmities last forever. The rules of warfare are based upon two principles. First, no man may attack a person of higher rank than himself; second, since blood violence is a mirk-deed, killing is achieved at a distance with blast-bolts; aristocrats however use swords and so demonstrate fortitude. Ordinary warriors will not look a man in the face and kill him; such an act haunts a man forever—unless the

act's done by mirk, when it becomes no more than a nightmare. But only if unplanned. Premeditated murder by mirk is vile murder."

"Now I know why my enemy sent me off to Bruse-Tansel instead of leaving me dead in a ditch."

"There is a second argument against murder: it cannot be concealed. The Fwai-chi detect crimes, and no one escapes; it is said that they can taste a dead man's blood and cite all the circumstances of his death."

ON THIS EVENING Pardero and Kolodin chose to spend the night in the tourist chambers on the lower decks of the tower. Kolodin made a telephone call and returned with a slip of paper, which he handed to Pardero. "The results of my inquiries. I asked myself, what ship, leaving Port Mar would land you at Carfaunge Space-port on 9th Mariel Gaean? Traffic Central's computer provided a name and a date. On 2 Ferario Gaean the *Berenicia* of the Black and Red Line departed Port Mar. More than likely you were aboard."

Pardero tucked the paper into his pocket. "Another matter which concerns me: how do I pay my passage to Marune? I have no money."

Kolodin made an expansive gesture. "No difficulties there. Your rehabilitation includes an extra thousand ozols for just this pur-

pose. Any more worries?"

Pardero grinned. "Lots of them."

"You'll have an interesting time of it," said Kolodin.

THE *Dylas Extranuator* drove out past the Pentagon, circled the diadem in the horn of the Unicorn and coasted into Tsambara, Alastor 1317. Here Pardero made connection with a ship of the Black and Red Line which after touching into a number of remote little places, veered off along the Fontinella Wisp and presently approached an isolated system of four dwarfs, respectively orange, blue, green and red.

Marune, Alastor 933, expanded below, to show a surface somewhat dark and heavy-textured below its fleets and shoals of clouds. The ship descended and settled upon the Port Mar Space-port. Pardero and a dozen other passengers alighted, surrendered their last ticket coupon, passed through the lobby and out upon the soil of Marune.

The time was isp. Osmo glared blue halfway up the southern sky; Maddar rode at the zenith; Cirse peered over the northeast horizon. The light was a trifle cold, but rich with those overtones provided by Maddar and Cirse; objects cast a three-phase shadow.

Pardero halted before the terminal, looked around the landscape, across the sky, inhaled a deep breath, exhaled. The air tasted fresh, cool and tart, unlike

both the dank air of Bruse-Tansel and the warm sweet air of Numenes. The suns sliding in different directions across the sky, the subtle lights, the taste of the air, soothed an ache in his mind he had not heretofore noticed. A mile to the west the structures of Port Mar stood clear and crisp; beyond the land fell away. The view seemed not at all strange. Whence came the familiarity? From research in Chamber 933? Or from his own experience? To the east the land swelled and rose in receding masses of ever higher mountains, reaching up to awesome heights. The peaks gleamed white with snow and gray with granite scree; below, bands of dark forest muffled the slopes. Mass collided with light to create shape and shadow; the clarity of the air as it swept through the spaces was almost palpable.

The waiting bus sounded an impatient chime; Pardero slowly climbed aboard, and the bus moved off along the Avenue of Strangers toward Port Mar.

The attendant made an announcement: "First stop, the Traveler's Inn. Second, the Outworld Inn. Then the Royal Rhune Hotel. Then over the bridge into New Town for the Cassander Inn and the University Inn."

Pardero chose the Outworld Inn which seemed sufficiently large and impersonal. Imminence hung in the air, so heavy that his enemy must also be oppressed.

Pardero cautiously surveyed the

lobby of the Outworld Inn, but saw only off-world folk who paid him no heed. The hotel personnel ignored him. So far, so good.

He took a lunch of soup, cold meat and bread in the dining room, as much to compose himself as to appease his appetite. He lingered at the table reviewing his plans. To broadcast the fewest ripples of disturbance, he must move softly, delicately, working from the periphery inward.

He left the hotel and sauntered back up the Avenue of Strangers toward the green-glass dome of the space-port terminal. As he walked Osmo dipped low and sank behind the western edge of Port Mar, and isp became rowan, with Cirse and Maddar yet in the sky, to produce a warm soft light that hung in the air like haze.

Arriving at the terminal, Pardo entered and went to the reception desk. The clerk came forward: a small portly man with the cinnamon skin and golden eyes of an upper caste Majar, one of those who lived in the timber and stucco houses on the slopes at the back of Old Town.

"How may I serve you, sir?"

Clearly Pardo aroused in his mind no quiver of recognition.

"Perhaps you can provide me some information," said Pardo. "On or about 2 Ferario I took passage aboard the *Berenicia* of the Black and Red Line. One of the other passengers asked me to perform a small errand, which I was unable to achieve. Now I must

notify him but I have forgotten his name, and I would like to glance at the relevant passenger list."

"No difficulties here, sir; the ledger is easily consulted." A display screen lit up; the clerk turned a knob; figures and listings flicked past. "Here we are at 2 Ferario. Quite correct, sir. The *Berenicia* arrived, took aboard eight passengers and departed."

Pardo studied the passenger list. "Why are the names in different columns?"

"By order of the Demographical Institute, so that they may gauge traffic between the worlds. Here are transients upon Marune taking departure. These names—only two as you see—represent folk of Marune bound for other worlds."

"My man would be one of these. Which took passage to Bruse-Tansel?"

The clerk, somewhat puzzled, consulted the list. "Neither. Baron Shimrod's destination was Xampias. The Nobel Serle Glaize boarded the ship on an 'open' ticket."

"What sort of ticket is this?"

"It is often purchased by a tourist who lacks a fixed destination. The ticket provides a stipulated number of travel-units; when these are exhausted the tourist purchases further units to fit his particular needs."

"This 'open ticket' used by Serle Glaize: how far might it have taken him? To Bruse-Tansel, for instance?"

"The *Berenicia* does not put

into Bruse-Tansel, but let me see. One hundred and forty-eight ozols to Dadarnisse Junction; to Bruse-Tansel one hundred and two ozols . . . Yes indeed. You will notice that the Noble Serle Glaize bought an open ticket to the value of two hundred and fifty ozols: to Bruse-Tansel exactly."

"So: Serle Glaize. This is my man" Pardero reflected upon the name. It lacked all resonance, all familiar flavor. He passed two ozols across the counter to the clerk, who took them with grave courtesy.

Pardero asked: "Who sold the ticket to Serle Glaize?"

"The initial is 'Y'; that would be Yanek, on the next shift."

"Perhaps you could telephone Yanek and ask if he recalls the circumstances. I will pay five ozols for significant information."

The clerk eyed Pardero sidelong. "What sort of information do you consider significant?"

"Who bought the ticket? I doubt if Serle Glaize did so himself. He must have come with a companion, whose identity I wish to learn."

The clerk went to a telephone and spoke in a guarded manner, from time to time glancing over his shoulder toward Pardero. At last he returned, his manner somewhat subdued. "Yanek barely recalls the matter. He believes that the ticket was bought by a person in a black Rhune cape, who also wore a gray casque with a visor and malar flaps, so that his

features made no impression upon Yanek. The time was busy; Yanek was preoccupied and noticed no more."

"This is not the information I require," Pardero grumbled. "Is there anyone who can tell me more?"

"I can think of no one, sir."

"Very well." Pardero counted down another two ozols. "This is for your kind cooperation."

"Thank you, sir. Allow me to make a suggestion. The Rhunes who visit Port Mar without exception use the Royal Rhune Hotel. Information, however, may be hard to come by."

"Thank you for the suggestion."

"Are you not a Rhune yourself, sir?"

"After a fashion, yes."

The clerk nodded and uttered a soft chuckle. "A Majar will mistake a Rhune never indeed, oh never . . ."

IN A PENSIVE MOOD Pardero returned along the Avenue of Strangers. The learned computations of M.T. Rady, the socio-psychic deductions of Oswen Ollave had been validated. Still, by what obscure means had the Majar recognized him? His features were not at all peculiar; his pigmentation was hardly distinctive; his clothes and hair-style were, by cosmopolitan standards, ordinary enough; in short, he differed little from any other guest at the Outworld Inn. No doubt he betrayed himself by unconscious gestures or attitudes;

perhaps he was more of a Rhune than he felt himself to be.

The Avenue of Strangers ended at the river; as Pardero reached the bridge Maddar slanted behind the western lowlands; Cirse moved slowly up the sky: green rowan. Green ripples flickered across the water; the white walls of New Town shone pale apple-green. Along the riverfront festoons of lights appeared, indicating places of entertainment: beer gardens, dance pavilions, restaurants. Pardero scowled at the brashness of the scene, then gave a soft rueful snort: had he surprised a set of Rhune attitudes surfacing through his amnesia?

Pardero turned into the narrow Street of Brass Boxes, which curved gradually up-slope, between ancient structures of age-blackened wood. The shops facing out upon the street uniformly showed a pair of high windows, a brass-bound door, and only the most unobtrusive indication as to their wares, as if each strove to exceed his neighbor in reserve.

The Street of Brass Boxes ended in a dim shadowed square, surrounded by curio shops, book stores, specialty houses of many varieties. Pardero saw his first Rhunes, moving from shop to shop, pondering the merchandise, indicating their needs to the Majar shopkeepers with indifferent flicks of the finger. None of these so much as glanced toward Pardero, which caused him irrationally mixed feelings.

He crossed the square and turned up the Avenue of Black Jangkars to an arched portal in a stone wall. He passed beneath and approached the Royal Rhune Hotel. He halted before the vestibule. Once inside the Royal Rhune there could be no turning back; he must accept the consequences of his return to Marune.

Through the tall doors stepped two men and a woman: the men wearing costumes of beige and black with dark red sashes, so similar as to suggest military uniforms; the woman, almost as tall as either of the men, wore a tight blue-gray body suit, with an indigo cape draping from black epaulettes: a mode considered suitable for visits to Port Mar, where the formal gauze gowns of the Realms were inappropriate. The three marched past Pardero, each allowing him a single glance. Pardero sensed no flicker of recognition: small cause for surprise; the Rhunes numbered well over a hundred thousand.

Pardero pushed aside the tall gaunt doors which seemed a part of the Rhune architectural environment. The lobby was an enormous high-ceilinged room with sounds echoing across a bare russet and black tile floor. The chairs were upholstered in leather; the central table displayed a variety of technical magazines; at the far end of the room a rack held brochures advertising tools, chemicals, craft supplies, papers and inks, rare wood

and stones. A tall narrow arch flanked by columns of fluted green stone communicated with the office. Pardero looked briefly around the lobby and passed through the arch into the office.

A clerk of advanced age rose to his feet and approached the counter; despite age, a bald head and unctuous wattles, his manner was alert and punctilious. In an instant he assessed Pardero, his garments and mannerisms, and performed a bow of precisely calibrated courtesy. "How may we oblige you, sir?" As he spoke a trace of uncertainty seemed to enter his manner.

"Several months ago," said Pardero, "about the first of Ferario to be more precise, I was a guest at this hotel, and I wish to refresh my recollections. Will you be so good as to show me the records for this date?"

"As you require, Your Dignity*." The clerk turned Pardero a second half-surreptitious side-glance, and his manner altered even further, becoming tinged with doubt, or uneasiness, or even anxiety. He bent with an almost audible creaking of vertebrae and elevated a leather-bound ledger to the counter. With a reverential flourish he parted the covers, and one by one turned back the pages, each of which displayed a schematic chart of the

*The all-purpose honorific, somewhat more respectful than a simple 'sir', to be applied to Rhunes of no great status.

hotel's accommodations, with notations in inks of various colors. "Here, Dignity, is the date you mention. If you choose to advise me, I will assist you."

Pardero inspected the ledger, but could not decipher the archaic calligraphy.

In a voice meant to convey an exquisite and comprehensive discretion the clerk spoke on. "On this phase our facilities were not over-extended. In our 'Sincere Courtesy' wing, we housed the trismets* of various gentlefolk. You will notice the chambers so indicated. In our 'Approbation' accommodations we served the Eiodark Torde and the Wirwove Ippolita, with their respective trismets. The 'Altitude' suite was occupied by the Kaiark Rianlle of Eccord, the Kraike Dervas, the Lissolet Maerio. In the 'Hyperion' suite we entertained the late Kaiark Jochaim of Scharrode, may his ghost be quickly appeased, with the Kraike Singhalissa, the Kangs Efraim and Destian, and the Lissolet Sthelany." The clerk turned his trembling and dubious

**Trismet*: The group of persons resulting from a 'trisme', the Rhune analogue of marriage. These persons might be a man and his trismetic female partner; or a man, the female partner, one or more of her children (of which the man may or may not be the sire). 'Family' approximates the meaning of 'trismet' but carries a package of inaccurate and inapplicable connotations. Paternity is often an uncertain determination; rank and status, therefore, are derived from the mother.

smile upon Pardero. "Do I not now have the honor of addressing His Force the new Kaiark of Scharrode?"

Pardero said somewhat ponderously: "You recognize me then?"

"Yes, Your Force, now that I have spoken with you. I admit to confusion; your presence has altered in a way which I hardly know how to explain. You seem, shall we say, more mature, more controlled, and of course your foreign garments enhance these differences. But I am certain that I am right." The clerk peered in sudden doubt. "Am I not, Your Force?"

Pardero smiled coolly. "How could you demonstrate the fact one way or the other without my assurance?"

The clerk muffled an exclamation. Muttering under his breath he brought to the counter a second leather-bound volume, twice the size of the ledger. He glanced peevishly toward Pardero, then turned thick pages of pale brown parchment.

Pardero asked: "What book is that?"

The clerk looked up from the pages, and now his gray old lips sagged incredulously. "I have here the Great Rhune Almanac. Are you not familiar with it?"

Pardero managed a curt nod. "Show me the folk who occupied the Hyperion suite."

"Inexorable Force: I was about to do so." The clerk turned pages. On the left were genealogical

charts, ladders, linkages and trees, indited in rich inks of various colors; on the right photographs were arranged in patterns relative to the charts: thousands upon thousands of names, an equal number of likenesses. The clerk turned the pages with maddening deliberation. At last he halted, pondered a moment, then tapped the page with his finger. "The lineage of Scharrode."

Pardero could restrain himself no longer. He turned the volume about and studied the photographs.

Halfway down the page a pale-haired man of middle maturity looked forth. His face, angular and bleak, suggested an interesting complexity of character. The forehead might have been that of a scholar, the wide mouth seemed composed against some unwelcome or unfashionable emotion, such as humor. The superscription read: *Jochaim, House of Benbuphar, Seventy-ninth Kaiark.*

A green linkage led to the still face of a woman, her expression unfathomable. The caption read: *Alferica, House of Jent.* Below, a heavy maroon line led to the countenance of an unsmiling young man: a face which Pardero recognized as his own. The caption read: *Efraim, House of Benbuphar, Kang of the Realm.*

At least I now know my name, thought 'Pardero'. I am Efraim, and I was Kang, and now I am Kaiark. I am a man of high rank! He looked up at the clerk, sur-

prising a shrewd and intent scrutiny. "You are curious," said Efraim. "There is no mystery. I have been off-planet and have just returned. I know nothing of what has happened in my absence. The Kaiark Jochaim is dead?"

"Yes, Your Force. There has been uncertainty and confusion, so I understand. You have been the subject of concern, since now, of course, you are the Eightieth Kaiark, and the allowable lapse has almost transpired."

Efraim nodded slowly. "So now I am Kaiark of Scharrode." He returned to the almanac, conscious of the clerk's gaze.

The other faces on the page were three. From Jochaim a second green line descended to the face of a handsome dark-haired woman with a pale high forehead, blazing black eyes, a keen high-bridged nose. The caption identified her as *Kraike Singhalissa*. From Singhalissa vermilion lines led first to a dark-haired young man with the aquiline features of his mother: Kan Destian, and a girl, dark-haired and pale, with pensive features and a mouth drooping at the corners, a girl in fact of rather remarkable beauty, despite the severity of her formal garments. The caption identified her as the *Lissolet Sthelany*.

Efraim spoke in a voice he tried to keep matter-of-fact: "What do you recall of our visit here to Port Mar?"

The clerk reflected. "The two trismets, of Scharrode and Ec-

cord, arrived in concert, and in general conducted themselves as a single party. The younger persons visited New Town, while their elders transacted business. Certain tensions became evident, and there was discussion of the visit to New Town, of which several of the older persons disapproved. Most exercised were the Kraike Singhalissa and the Kaiark Rianlle, who thought that the expedition lacked dignity. When you failed to appear by isp 25 of the Third Cycle, everyone felt concern; evidently you had failed to apprise anyone of your departure."

"Evidently," said Efraim. "Did mirk occur during our visit?"

"No; there was no mirk."

"You heard no remarks, you recall no circumstances which might explain my departure?"

The clerk looked puzzled. "A most curious question, Your Force! I remember nothing of consequence, though I was surprised to hear that you had acquainted yourself with that off-world vagabond." He sniffed. "No doubt he took advantage of your condescension; he is known as a persuasive rogue."

"Which 'off-world vagabond' is this?"

"What? Do you not remember exploring New Town with the fellow Lorcas?"

"I had forgotten his name. Lorcas, you say?"

"Matho Lorcas. He consorts with New Town trash; he is fogleman for all these sebal cre-

tins at the university."

"And when did Kaiark Jochaim die?"

"Soon after his return to Scharrode, in battle against Gosso, Kaiark of Gorgetto. You have returned opportunely; in another several days you would no longer be Kaiark, and I have heard the Kaiark Rianlle has proposed a trismeto unite the realms of Ec-cord and Scharrode. Now that you are returned, conditions may be altered." The clerk turned pages in the almanac. "King Rinalle is an intense and determined man." The clerk tapped a photograph. Efraim saw a handsome determined face, framed by a casque of shining silver ringlets. The Kraike Dervas looked forth blankly; her face seemed to lack distinctive character. The same was true of the Lissolet Maerio, who stared forth expressionlessly, but who nonetheless displayed a youthful, if rather vacuous, prettiness.

The clerk asked cautiously: "Do you plan to stay with us, Force?"

"I think not. And I wish you to say nothing whatever of my return to Marune. I must clarify certain circumstances."

"I quite understand, Force. Thank you very much indeed!"—this last for the ten ozols which Efraim had placed on the counter.

Efraim emerged from the hotel into a melancholy umber. He walked slowly back down the Avenue of Black Jangkars, and coming once more to the square he

now took time to walk around, and with awe and wonder investigated the shops. Could there exist anywhere in all Alastor Cluster a richer concentration of the arcane, the esoteric, the special? And Efraim wondered what had been his own fields of erudition, his own unique virtuositities. Whatever they were, he retained none of them; his mind was a blank.

Somewhat mournfully he proceeded down the Street of Brass Boxes to the river. New Town appeared quiet. Festoons of lights still glowed along the riverfront, but the beer gardens and cafés lacked animation. Efraim turned away, walked up the Avenue of Strangers to the Outworld Inn. He went to his chamber and slept.

He dreamt a series of vivid dreams, and awoke in a flush of excitement. After a moment he tried to reform the shattered images into focus, so that he might grasp the meanings which had marched across his sleeping mind. To no avail. Composing himself, he slept once more until a gong announced the hour of breakfast.

Chapter 5

EFFRAIM EMERGED from the hotel into that phase sometimes known as half-aud. Furad and Oemo ruled the sky, to produce a warm yellow light, which connoisseurs of such matters considered fresh, effervescent and gay, but lacking the richness and suavity of full

aud. He stood for a moment breathing the cool air. His melancholy had diminished; better to be Kaiark Efraim of Scharrode than Efraim the butcher, or Efraim the cook, or Efraim the garbage collector.

He set off along the Avenue of Strangers. Arriving at the bridge, instead of veering left into the Street of Brass Boxes he crossed into New Town, and discovered an environment totally different from that of Old Town.

The geography of New Town, so Efraim would discover, was simple. Four thoroughfares paralleled the river: the Estrada, which terminated at the university; the Avenue of the Agency; then the Avenue of Haune and the Avenue of Douaune, after Osmo's two small dead planets.

Efraim walked westward along the Estrada, examining the cafés and beer-gardens with wistful interest. To his present perspective they seemed almost flagrantly innocent. He stepped into one of the beer gardens and glanced toward the young man and girl who sat huddled so closely together. Could he ever feel so easily licentious in full view of everyone? Perhaps even now he had not escaped the strictures of his past, which after all was less than six months gone.

He approached a portly man in a white apron who seemed to be the manager. "Sir, are you acquainted with a certain Matho Lorcas?"

"'Matho Lorcas'? I do not know the gentleman."

Efraim continued west along the Estrada and presently at a booth devoted to the sale of off-world periodicals the name 'Matho Lorcas' sparked recognition. The girl attendant pointed along the avenue: "Ask there, in the Satyr's Cave. You might find him at work. If not, they know his dwelling."

Matho Lorcas was indeed at work, serving mugs of beer along the bar: a tall young man with a keen vivacious face. His dark hair was cut short in a casual and unassuming style; when he spoke his thin crooked mouth worked dozens of changes across his face. Efraim watched him a moment before approaching. Matho Lorcas was a person whose humor, intelligence and easy flamboyance might well excite the antagonism of less favored individuals. Hard to suspect malice, or even guile, in Matho Lorcas. The fact remained: soon after making Lorcas' acquaintance Efraim had been rendered mindless and shipped off across the Cluster.

Efraim approached the bar and took a seat; Lorcas approached. Efraim asked: "You are Matho Lorcas?"

"Yes indeed!"

"Do you recognize me?"

Lorcas gave Efraim a frowning scrutiny. His face cleared. "You are the Rhune! I forget your name."

"Efraim, of Scharrode."

"I remember you well, and the two girls you escorted. How grave and proper their behavior! You have changed! In fact you seem a different person. How goes life in your mountain realm?"

"As usual, or so I suppose. I am most anxious to have a few words with you. When will you be free?"

"At any time. Right now, if you like; I am bored with the work. Ramono! Take charge of affairs!" He ducked under the bar and asked of Efraim: "Will you take a mug of beer? Or perhaps a glass of Del wine?"

"No thank you." Efraim had decided upon a policy of caution and reserve. "It is early in the day for me."

"Just as you like. Come, let us sit over here where we can watch the river flow by . . . So. Do you know, I have often wondered about you, and how you eventually—well, shall we say, accommodated yourself to your dilemma, pleasant though it might have been."

"How do you mean?"

"The two beautiful girls you escorted—though I realize in the Mountain Realms things aren't done quite so easily."

Aware that he must seem dense and dull, Efraim asked: "What do you recall of the occasion?"

Lorcas held up his hands in protest. "So long ago? After so many other occasions? Let me think . . ." He grinned. "I deceive you. In truth, I've thought

long and often of those two girls, so alike, so different, and oh, how wasted in those ineffable Mountain Realms! They walk and talk like enchanted blocks of ice—though I suspect that one or the other, or both, under the proper circumstances might easily melt; and I for one would rejoice to arrange such circumstances. You consider me sebal? I'm far worse; I'm positively chorastic*!" He glanced sidelong toward Efraim. "You don't seem appalled, or even shocked. For a fact you *are* a person different from the earnest young Kang of six months ago."

"This may well be true," said Efraim without impatience. "Returning to that occasion, what happened?"

Lorcas turned Efraim another quizzical side-glance. "You don't remember?"

"Not well."

"Not too well."

"Odd. You seemed quite alert. You recall how we met?"

Lorcas gave a half-incredulous shrug. "I had just stepped out of the Caduceus Book Shop. You approached and asked directions to the Fairy Gardens, where at the time Galligade's Puppets were entertaining. The mode as I recall was low aud, going into umber, which always seems to me to be a rather festive time. I noted that you and the Kang Destian—so I recall his name—excorted not one

*Chorasm: sebalism carried to a remarkable extreme.

but two pretty girls, and I'd never had the opportunity to meet a Rhune before, so I volunteered to conduct you in person. At the Fairy Gardens we found that Galligade had just finished his show and the disappointment of the girls prompted me to a spasm of insane altruism. I insisted on acting as your host: not my usual conduct, I assure you. I ordered a bottle of wine and etiquette screens for those who considered them necessary and so there we were: the Lissolet Sthelany, observing me with aristocratic detachment, the other girl—I forget her name—

"The Lissolet Maerio."

"Correct. She was only a trifle more cordial, though, mind you, I'm making no complaints. Then there was the Kang Destian, who was sardonic and surly, and yourself, who behaved with elegant formality. You were the first Rhunes I'd met, and when I found you to be of royal blood, I thought my efforts and ozols well spent.

"So we sat and drank the wine and listened to the music. More accurately, I drank wine. You and the Lissolet Maerio, thoroughly daring, sipped behind your etiquette screens. The other two declared themselves uninterested. The girls watched the students and marveled at the crassness and sebalism. I fell in love with the Lissolet Sthelany, who of course was oblivious. I attempted all my charm; she studied me with fasci-

nated revulsion and presently she and Destian returned to the hotel.

"You and the Lissolet Maerio remained until Destian came back with orders that Maerio return to the hotel. You and I were left alone. I was due at the Three Lanterns; you walked up Jibberree Hill with me. I went to work; and you returned to the hotel: that's all there is to it."

Efraim heaved a deep sigh. "You did not accompany me to the hotel?"

"No. You went off by yourself, in a most unsettled mood. If I may make bold to ask—why are you so concerned about this evening?"

Efraim saw no reason to hold back the truth. "On that evening I lost my memory. I remember arriving at Carfaunge, on Bruse-Tansel, and I finally made my way to Numenes and the Connatic's Hospital. The experts declared me a Rhune. I returned to Port Mar; I arrived yesterday. At the Royal Rhune Hotel I learned my name, and I find that I am now the Kaiark of Scharrode. Other than this I know nothing. I recognize no one and nothing; my past is a blank. How can I conduct my own affairs responsibly, much less those of the Realm? I must set things right. Where do I start? How do I proceed? Why was my memory taken from me? Who took me to the space-port and put me aboard the space-ship? How shall I explain myself to the Schardes? If the past is empty,

the future seems full, of concern and doubt and confusion. And I suspect that I will find little sympathy at Benbuphar Strang."

Lorcas gave a soft ejaculation, and sat back, his eyes glistening. "Do you know, I envy you? How lucky you are, with the mystery of your own past to solve!"

"I lack all such enthusiasm," said Efraim. "The past looms over me; I feel stifled. My enemies know me; I can only grope for them. I go out to Scharrode blind and helpless."

"The situation is not without compensations," murmured Lorcas. "Most people would gladly rule a Mountain Realm, or any realm whatever. Not a few would be pleased to inhabit the same castle with the Lissolet Sthelany."

"These compensations are all very well, but they do not expose my enemy."

"Assuming that the enemy exists."

"He exists. He put me aboard the *Berenicia* and paid my fare to Bruse-Tansel."

"Bruse-Tansel is not close. Your enemy would seem not to lack funds."

Efraim grunted. "Who knows how much money of my own I carried? Perhaps I paid my own fare out to the limit of my pocket-book."

"This would be a fine sardonic touch," Lorcas agreed. "If true, your enemy has style."

"Another possibility exists," mused Efraim. "I may be looking

at the matter backwards."

"An interesting thought. In what exact regard?"

"Perhaps I committed some horrid deed which I could not bear to contemplate, thus inducing amnesia, and some person—my friend rather than my enemy—sent me away from Marune that I might escape the penalty for my acts."

Lorcas uttered an incredulous laugh. "Your conduct in my presence was quite genteel."

"So how then, immediately after parting from you, did I lose my memory?"

Lorcas considered a moment. "This might not be so mysterious after all."

"The savants on Numenes were baffled. But you have gained an insight into my problems?"

Lorcas grinned. "I know someone who isn't a savant." He jumped to his feet. "Come along, let's visit this man."

Efraim dubiously arose. "Is it safe? You might be the guilty person. I don't want to end up on Bruse-Tansel a second time."

Lorcas chuckled. "You are a Rhune no longer. The Rhunes lack all humor; their lives are so strange that the absurd seems merely another phase of normality. I am not your secret enemy, I assure you. In the first place I lack the two or three hundred ozols to send you to Bruse-Tansel."

Efraim followed Lorcas out upon the avenue. Lorcas said:

"We are bound for a rather peculiar establishment. The proprietor is an eccentric. Unkind folk consider him disreputable. At the moment he is out of vogue, owing to the efforts of the Benkenists, who are currently all the rage around the college. They affect a stoic imperturbability to everything except their 'inner norms', and Skogel's numbered mixtures seriously interfere with normalcy. As for me, I reject all fads except those of my own devising. Can you imagine what now preoccupies me?"

"No."

"The Mountain Realms. The genealogies, the waxing and waning of fortunes, the poetry and declamations, the ceremonial fumes, the gallantries and romantic postures. The eruditions, and scholarship. Do you realize that Rhune monographs circulate throughout the Cluster and the Gaean Reach as well? Do you realize that sport is unknown among the Realms? There are neither games nor frivolous recreations, not even among the children?"

"The thought never occurred to me. Where are we going?"

"Yonder, up the Street of the Clever Flea . . . Naturally you would not know how the street got its name." As they walked, Lorcas recounted the ribald legend. Efraim listened with only half an ear. They turned the corner into a street of marginal enterprises: a booth selling fried

clams, a gambling arcade, a cabaret decorated with red and green lights, a bordello, a novelty shop, a travel agency, a store which displayed in the show window a stylized Tree of Life, the golden fruit labeled in a flowing unreadable script. Here Lorcas paused. "Let me do the talking, unless Skogel asks you a direct question. He has a queer manner which antagonizes everyone, but which I happen to know is spurious. Or at least I strongly suspect as much. In any event, be surprised at nothing; also, if he quotes a price, agree, no matter what your reservations. Nothing puts him off like haggling. Come along then; let's try our luck." He entered the shop with Efraim following slowly behind.

From the dimness at the back of the shop Skogel appeared: a man of medium stature, thin as a post with long arms and a round waxen face, above which rose spikes of dust-brown hair. "Pleasant modes," said Lorcas. "Have you collected yet from our friend Boodles?"

"Nothing. But I expected nothing and dealt with him accordingly."

"How so?"

"You know his requirements. He received only tincture of cacodyl in water, which may or may not have served his purposes."

"He made no complaints to me, though in truth he has seemed somewhat subdued of late."

"If he chooses, he may come to me for consolation. And who is this gentleman? Something about him seems Rhune, something else says out-world."

"You are right in both directions. He is a Rhune who has spent an appreciable time on Numenes, and Bruse-Tansel as well. You instantly wonder why. The answer is simple: he has lost his memory. I told him that if anyone could help him it would be you."

"Bah. I don't stock memories in boxes, neatly labeled like so many cathartics. He'll have to contrive his own memories. Isn't this easy enough?"

Lorcas looked at Efraim with an expression of rueful amusement. "Contrary fellow that he is, he wants his own memories back."

"He won't find them here. Where did he lose them? That's the place to look."

"An enemy stole his memory and put him on a ship to Bruse-Tansel. My friend is anxious to punish this thief, hence his set chin and gleaming eyes."

Skogel, throwing back his head, laughed and slapped the counter. "That's more like it! Too many wrong-doers escape with whole skins and profit! Revenge! There's the word! I wish you luck! Good modes, sir." And Skogel, turning his back, stalked stiff-legged back into the dimness of his shop. Efraim stared after him in wonder, but Lorcas signaled him to patience: Presently Skogel stalked

forward. "And what do you require on this occasion?"

Lorcas said: "Do you recall your remarks of a week ago?"

"In regard to what?"

"Psychomorphosis."

"A large word," grumbled Skogel. "I spoke it at random."

"Would any of this apply to my friend?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"And the source of this psychomorphosis?"

Skogel put his hands on the counter and leaning forward scrutinized Efraim with owlish intensity. "You are a Rhune?"

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"I seem to be Efraim, Kaiark of Scharrode."

"Then you must be wealthy."

"I don't know whether I am or not."

"And you want the return of your memory?"

"Naturally."

"You have come to the wrong place. I deal in commodities of other sorts." Skogel slapped the counter and made as if to turn away again.

Lorcas said smoothly: "My friend insists that you at least accept a fee, or honorarium, for your advice."

"Fee? For words? For guesses and hypotheses? Do you take me for a man without shame?"

"Of course not!" declared Lorcas. "He only wants to learn where his memory went."

"Then this is my guess, and he

may have it free of cost. He has eaten Fwai-chi shag." Skogel indicated the shelves, cases and cabinets of his shop, which were stocked with bottles of every size and shape, crystallized herbs, stoneware jugs, metal oddments, tins, phials, jars, and an unclassifiable miscellaneity of confusing scope. "I will reveal a truth," declared Skogel portentously. "Much of my merchandise, on a functional level, is totally ineffective. Psychically, symbolically, subliminally, the story is different! Each item exerts its own sullen strength, and sometimes I feel myself in the presence of elementals. With an infusion of spider grass, mixed perhaps with pulverized devil's eye, I achieve astounding results. The Benkenists, idiots and witlings as they are, aver that only the credulous are affected; they are wrong! Our organisms swim in a paracosmic fluid, which no one can comprehend; none of our senses find scope or purchase, so to speak. Only by operative procedures, which the Benkenists deride, can we manipulate this ineffable medium; and by so stating, am I therefore a charlatan?" Skogel slapped the counter with split-faced grin of triumph.

With delicate emphasis Lorcas inquired: "And what of the Fwai-chi?"

"Patience!" snapped Skogel. "Allow me my brief moment of vanity. After all, I do not veer too far astray."

"By all means," said Lorcas hastily. "Decaim to your heart's content."

Not altogether mollified, Skogel took up the thread of his remarks. "I have long speculated that the Fwai-chi interact with the paracosmos somewhat more readily than men, although they are a taciturn race and never explain their feats, or perhaps they take their multiplex environment for granted. In any event they are a most peculiar and versatile race, with the Majar, at least, appreciate. I refer of course to that final poor fragment of the race who live over the hill." Skogel looked truculently from Lorcas to Efraim, but neither challenged his opinion.

Skogel continued. "A certain shaman of the Majars fancies to consider himself in my debt, and not too long ago he invited me to Atabus to witness an execution. My friend explained an innovation in Majar justice: the suspect, or the adjudged—among the Majars the distinction is slight—is dosed with Fwai-chi shag, and his reactions, which range from torpor through hallucination, antics, convulsions, frantic feats of agility, to instant death, are noted. The Majar are nothing but a pragmatic folk; they take a lively interest in the capabilities of the human organism, and consider themselves great scientists. In my presence they administered a golden-brown gum from dorsal Fwai-chi shags, and the suspect at once fancied

himself four different persons who conducted a vivacious conversation among themselves and the onlookers, employing a single tongue and larynx to produce two and sometimes three voices simultaneously. My host described some of the other effects he had witnessed, and mentioned a certain shag whose exudation blotted away human memory. I therefore suggest that your friend has been dosed with Fwai-chi shag." He peered from one to the other, showing a small trembling smile of triumph. "And that, in short, is my opinion."

"All very well," said Lorcas, "but how is my friend to be cured?"

Skogel made a careless gesture. "No cure is known, for the reason that none exists. What is gone, is gone."

Lorcas looked ruefully at Efraim. "So there you have it. Someone dosed you with Fwai-chi shag."

"I wonder who," said Efraim. "I wonder who."

Lorcas turned to speak to Skogel, but the shopkeeper had disappeared into the dim chamber at the rear of his establishment.

Lorcas and Efraim returned along the Street of the Clever Flea to the Estrada, Efraim pensive and grim. Lorcas, after darting half a dozen glances toward his companion, could no longer contain his curiosity. "So now what will you do?"

"What must be done."

Ten paces later Lorcas said: "You evidently have no fear of death."

Efraim shrugged.

Lorcas asked: "How will you achieve this business?"

"I must return to Scharrode," said Efraim. "Is there any other way? My enemy is someone I know well; would I drink with a stranger? In Port Mar were the following persons: Kaiark Jochaim, who is dead. The Kraike Singhalissa. The Kang Destian. The Lissolet Sthelany. Then, from Eccord, the Kaiark Rianlle, the Kraike Dervas, and the Lissolet Maerio. And, conceivably, Matho Lorcas, except in this case, why would you take me to Skogel?"

"Precisely so," said Lorcas. "On that distant occasion I dosed you only with good wine from which you took no harm."

"And you saw nothing significant, nothing suspicious, nothing dire?"

Lorcas reflected. "I noticed nothing overt. I felt stifled passion, and flows of emotion, but where they led I could not divine. To be candid, I expected strange personalities among the Rhunes, and I made no attempt to understand what I saw. Without a memory you will also be handicapped."

"Very likely. But now I am Kaiark and everyone must go at my pace, I can recover my memory at leisure. What is the best transportation to Scharrode?"

"There's no choice," said Lor-

cas. "You hire an air car and fly out." He looked casually up into the sky, which Cirse was about to depart. "If you permit, I will accompany you."

"What is your interest in the affair?" asked Efraim suspiciously.

Lorcas responded with an airy gesture. "I have long wished to visit the Realms. The Rhunes are a fascinating people and I am anxious to learn more about them. And, if the truth be known, I am anxious to pursue one or two acquaintances."

"You might not enjoy your visit. I am Kaiark, but I have enemies and they might not distinguish between us."

"I rely upon the notorious Rhune revulsion against violent conduct, which they abandon only during their incessant wars. And who knows? You might find a companion useful."

"Perhaps. Who is this 'acquaintance' whom you are anxious to cultivate? The Lissolet Sthelany?"

Lorcas nodded glumly. "She is

an intriguing young woman; in fact, I will go so far as to say that she represents a challenge. As a rule, pretty ladies find me sympathetic, but the Lissolet Sthelany barely notices my existence."

Efraim gave a sour chuckle. "In Scharrode the situation will be worse rather than better."

"I expect no true triumphs; still, if I can persuade her to alter her expression from time to time, I will consider the journey a success."

"I doubt if all will go so easily. The Rhunes find outland manners coarse and vulgar."

"You are Kaiark; your orders must be obeyed. If you decree tolerance, then the Lissolet Sthelany must instantly bend to your will."

"It will be an interesting experiment," said Efraim. "Well then, make yourself ready; we leave at once!"

—to be concluded—

—JACK VANCE

ON SALE NOW IN THRILLING S-F (July)

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THE WAY OF OUR FATHERS

DAPHNE CASTELL

Illustrated by TONY GLEESON

CORFIELD WALKED SLOWLY down the broad street of the small town. The soft greenish dust swished under his feet, but ahead of him he could see another shower on the way, a warm damp cloud that would lay the dust once more, and pour renewed strength into the giant minha plants that reared their great heads up from the fields all around. They would drink thirstily, surging and swaying together, and all the time they would be budding and building, thickening their stems to timber, swelling their first crop of fruits, poking up small purple shoots for the second crop, between each pair of leaves, and draining the moisture as thick sweet sap into their hollow veins.

In all the years Corfield had spent on Haan, he had never quite recovered from his wonder at the ecstasy of growth that pos-

sessed the living things on the planet. True, they had all the advantages that vegetables could have—constant sunlight from the tiny, harsh, blue-white sun that was never veiled for long, constant rain from the long low woolly clouds that drifted benignantly past every few hours, and anxious assiduous care from the most gifted race of gardeners Corfield had ever known, the Haan'ha. The seasons here were twice as long as those of his own Terra, lying something like fifteen light-years away, just as the year was over six hundred days long; and the climate was gentler, with few of the violent catastrophes that could beset Terran growths. The plants on Haan grew as if from sheer delight in growth, as if from affection for their gardeners and the wish to please them.

Corfield was a thin stringy man,

drying up in middle age, irritable and depressed by turns, after a life spent in hard and unrecognized work; he was no sentimentalist, but he sometimes thought that this must be the most lovely and loveable planet in all the misty reaches of the universe. The Eden of the galaxies: and what happened, he thought, when one discovered that everything in the garden of Eden was not lovely? One thing about the Terran Adam and Eve, at least they had more sense than to refuse to acknowledge that there was anything wrong at all!

The distance between the low, gracefully-rounded dwellings of the Haan'ha began to increase, as town faded gently into countryside. Women smiled peaceable greetings at him over their work in the doorways—you never found one of the Haan'ha far away from the open air—and thin lively, olive-green children, mobile as fawns, ran fluidly in and out of the maze-like games that absorbed them past all attention for the man from another planet.

Near and to one side of the road rose a higher building more strongly built and more impressive, but still with the curvy, wavy outline that distinguished all the wooden buildings of Haan. The East-side-of-town-temple of Lesi, its name meant. If he looked back, he could just see through the soft air the other four temples, those for the other three quarters of the town, and the one



for the centre.

It was unthinkable that any town on the surface of Haan should exist without these five places dedicated to the worship of Lesi. Corfield twisted his thin features into a resigned grimace. If it hadn't been for Lesi, whatever the benevolent, plant-loving, space-trotting creature had been, the Haan'ha wouldn't be what *they* were. And they also wouldn't be in danger of virtual extinction, and he, Corfield, wouldn't be a battleground for so many worries, prejudices, hopes and exasperations.

He came to a halt and looked out over the young fields that nursed the minha plants in their brown swelling breasts. The blue and green and purple surfaces of hosts of leaves slid and turned in the breeze, the long brown stems rattled and hummed merrily, and small insectile creatures hovered or crawled around them, helping or hindering their growth. Most of the men of the village were out this morning, tending the honoured plants. Not the women, naturally. It was not a matter of tradition for the women to do anything more than look after the men who looked after the plants, and Haan was, above all, a place of tradition.

Most of the craftsmen or manual workers in the village who had nothing to do directly with tending the minha plants were women, although some men also held such minor posts. But the

care of the plants, the harvesting of them, the treatment and conversion of them into the infinite number of end products which supported in the main the population of the whole planet—this was the work for men.

Two of the Haan'ha were approaching Corfield now, smooth lips curling in their usual friendly smiles. When Corfield had first seen them, he had been wary of this perpetual suavity. His mind had told him that nobody could possibly be friendly to everybody all the time. But a long acquaintance with them had taught him the simple fact that the Haan'ha, alone of races in the Galaxy, were exactly what they seemed. They followed the laws of Lesi, had followed them for how many thousands of years no-one knew. These laws told them, amongst other things, that it was good to love all that was created by nature, and they did so.

They took the way of their fathers, and why should they not do so, since all experience had shown them that it was a good thing to do? Corfield told himself anxiously from time to time that it was a sucker planet, pure and simple, that they needed protection from themselves, that they had merely been lucky so far; but he could not entirely prevent himself from feeling an odd and exposed sense of shamefulness whenever he met the smiling and innocuous eyes of a Haani.

Ar'hui, who met him first, was

the priest of the eastern temple to Lesi. He did not, of course, work in the fields, or touch the minha plants constructively, since his person was sacred to Lesi. He walked the fields constantly, blessing them and consecrating them with his presence, and easing with his encouragement the labours of the workers. His long, hard-chinned face reminded Corfield of the pictures he had seen of ancient statues on Easter Island, that part of Terra Where only millionaires now lived, each in solitary state on his own island. But Ar'hui's was a softer, livelier po-tence.

N'fath, the younger man, was the closest approach to a personal friend that Corfield had made on this planet of friends. N'fath's face was darker in colour than most, and perhaps for this reason betrayed more clearly any slight traces of discontent that might be passing though his mind than did those of his countrymen. He laughed more readily than they did, and he approached more nearly to impatience, if you could call it that. All his emotions seemed more vivid to Corfield, and maybe, Corfield told himself, this made him easier for a Terran to accept as a friend.

Ar'hui raised his arms, curved his hands delicately backwards and forwards in token of welcome.

"The young plants flourish," he said in his musical old voice. "They are stronger for your coming. Lesi is with them. There

should be a good crop. The Therran'ye shall be given many plants for their work." He had no equivalent for the word *research*; and, like all the Haan'ha, his palate found it impossible to form a taste for the harsh consonants, velar and fricative, that bristled on the Terran tongue. Terran became 'Therran', almost voiceless, and was given the polite suffix "-ye", 'off-planet race', instead of the native "-ha" plural.

"I am glad that the plants flourish, Ar'hui," said Corfield, frowning. "Still, it seems to me that they are not as numerous as they were last year. Nor as strong. Are there not bare patches over there? And should not most of the young plants have attained their fifth pair of leaves by now? I see some that are barely at their third pair."

Ar'hui shrugged almost imperceptibly. His smile was pleasant, but Corfield thought he could detect a trace of something like pity in it.

"Well, friend Horfil," he said peacably, "some years, in the nature of things, are better for growing than others. The minha always grow well, but in some seasons they grow better, in others they do not grow quite as well. There are always plenty of them. Lesi instructed them so. Next year, no doubt, they will be far better than ever."

"But can you not remember," insisted Corfield, "the years when the minha were so thick there was

never any trace of ground to be seen—when they needed no help or little from the Haan'ha to protect them against the wood-boring animals, when they never had a spot of disease on their leaves, when you never found a soft-stemmed plant, as you do nowadays from time to time?"

N'fath frowned. "It is true that some of our people say that the minha need more work and more help," he agreed. "But Ar'hui," he bowed to the old priest, "says that these things may well happen in long cycles. You have only been here a short time—a few of our years, though more of yours, Horfil. These things will right themselves." He ended, though, almost on a questioning note; and Ar'hui's face, turned towards him for a moment, wore the expression of a man who does not receive the support he expected. It was to N'fath he addressed himself, when he spoke next.

"There must be no doubt. There is no need and no room for doubt where the words of Lesi are concerned—though there is reason to believe," he added courteously, "that the knowledge of Therra is great, and the application of it meant in kindness." He had dropped into the slower, more exaggerated inflection of the Haan speech politely directed to a well-born stranger, and Corfield sighed as he recognized the repulse.

Nevertheless he tried again. "Ar'hui, you admit that Terran

science is great, and may be good. I tell you, as I have told you so many times, that the land that bears your minha plants is tired. In the days when Lesi laid down your laws, the laws that made you a race of men, when you had been, as you say, little else but animals, the shape of the land was different. There was more of it, and less people. Less minha plants were grown, and there was plenty of good nourishment for them in the soil.

"Now the soil has grown tired, as your people grow tired after a long day in the fields, using their muscles and their brains. The land needs certain things replaced in it—the iodine that the plants use in such tiny quantities, a substance that we know already, and the heavy element heraklium, that we knew nothing of before we landed here, and by your courtesy set up our laboratories. The minha use so little of these that it is only through the minute researches of Terrans that it is known at all—and now it is almost all gone from the soil, in the many centuries of cultivation that have followed the teachings of Lesi. Those teachings were good—but Lesi would have been the first to admit that they were not sufficient now. He would have been the first to admit that Terra could help you, by supplying you with iodine, and teaching you how to make the element heraklium artificially. You must see that your plants grow less year by year, and

that as the numbers decrease, so do the qualities of the plant. Last year's harvest was a good one, true, but the year before that there was less building timber all over the planet than ever before; and your forests are too small and scrubby to supply the lack. There is more of the swelling disease among your people than ever—the fruit has no longer the power to prevent it in every case. You have to think of your children, and your children's children. The *minha* lessens every year, and one day there will not be enough to support your civilization which depends so greatly on it. You will return to the half-starved savagery which Lesi found here before he taught you the way of the keepers of the *minha*."

Ar'hui sought for words, as he walked along the warm furrows of the field, his thin robe streaming and fluttering in the soft wind. How do you explain to a creature from an alien planet the truths by which you live, the beliefs which are as simple and self-evident to you as sunrise and sunset?

He said at last, "Lesi taught us that the *minha* would be life to us. It is so, for all important purposes. All other things are luxuries—pleasant, but not necessary. Lesi found the *minha*—he recognized it for what it would be to us; and he told us exactly what we must do, for the care of it. He told us to use the dung of our domestic animals to spread round it, and how to plant it and prune

it. He told us that every other year we must change our plantings so that the fodder plants for our animals grew where the *minha* plants had been, and the *minha* plants grew instead of fodder—"

"Two-year rotation is not enough for lands as heavily cropped as yours," interrupted Corfield.

Ar'hui continued as if he had not heard, "For more than two thousand of our years he was with our fathers, teaching them the way. Finally, having taught us that to love is the reason for the existence of plants, men, and animals, he left us, in a blaze that blinded and deafened all nearby."

Corfield nodded. The power-plant wreck that had reduced the great alien ship to the fragments of tortured metal and twisted beams he had seen at Fral'ha'fral, the largest town of the planet, must have involved forces too mighty even for his own star-travelling sciences to consider.

For one thing, it had almost certainly been destroyed by implosion, not explosion.

For another, Fral'ha'fral had been reverently rebuilt on the warped and glassy sheets of the ruins, the effect of atomics on the town when Lesi went up in his blaze of glory, *but*, according to legend, there had been no damage to man or animal—except, of course, to Lesi—either then, or as a slow-lingering aftermath of radiation horrors.

He wondered what the incredibly ancient being had been trying to do, all those years ago. Tinkering with his ship, most probably, trying to salvage something from the stranded craft, perhaps even making an attempt to wire the crippled plant and fabric together so that he might limp home again—wherever home might have been. As far as Terran scientists had been able to discover, it didn't look as if it had been anywhere in this galaxy. That was an incredible thought even now, to Corfield—beings that could leap across the appalling craters of dark that yawned between galaxy and galaxy. The last supreme chasm of emptiness—even the faint glimmer of stellar dust that crawled between suns thinned out and died despairingly at the edge of those depths.

But Lesi had come across them, and his ship had failed on this small planet, and there he had stayed, to found a civilization based on the minha plants, before he had died—or gone on elsewhere, to teach others about the minha, as the Haan'ha had it.

Re'thin, the priest of the Central temple of Lesi in Fral'ha'Fral, had held learned and amicable arguments with Ar'hui in Corfield's presence, the two of them debating whether Lesi would have taken some of the minha seeds with him on his last journey, to the new worlds he would be visiting, or whether he would employ his powers to turn the local vege-

tation into minha when he got there, or whether he would simply make use of the plants he found in their natural, but most highly cultivated form.

N'fath had said afterwards irritably that it seemed to him that the priesthood wasted a lot of time arguing about small details which no one would ever decide for certain until they were all reunited with Lesi. It was one of the few criticisms Corfield had heard of the priesthood. We'ya had made others, but then she was an exceptionally privileged person, for a woman, being remarkably intelligent, and a priest's daughter, and an interpreter into the bargain.

And—Corfield stiffened his tired back and felt slow warmth spreading through his thin body—she was beautiful, by any standards, olive-skinned and green eyed, her hair as dark a green as the shadows under the minha plants, touched with brownish glints.

“—And,” finished Ar'hui in courteous triumph, “all that Lesi has ever taught us has been true. We have seen the truth of his rule and we live by it. There is no other way for us but the way of our fathers.” He finished with a dismissive gesture, and having talked himself back into a good humour, swept his cloak round him, and went striding off, singing in his thin old voice, turning once to wave cheerfully at his defeated opponent in debate, Corfield, who

in turn shrugged and taking N'fath by an elbow retraced his steps.

S'sosh, N'fath's cousin, propped on one arm among the scrubby bushes, resting from his shift for a cool hour, before going home to the food his wife would have ready for him, called to them as they scrambled up the bank and past him.

Corfield would have liked to go on. His only purpose in coming had been to reason with Ar'hui, while the old man was there to see for himself the insidious inroads deficiencies in heraklium and iodine could make upon the plants. His argument had failed, as so many earlier ones had done. He felt an immense tiredness and a sour irritating sense of failure rising in him, and he wanted to be back in his room at the flimsy, white-walled laboratory, with books and tools of his work round him. But courtesy demanded that N'fath respond to his cousin's invitation, and that Corfield accompany him.

They sat down beside S'sosh and accepted water from his flask, offered as ceremoniously as if it were the little-used wine brewed from minha bark. A little chrome-coloured stream ran at their feet. S'sosh had probably filled his bottle from it, but none of them would have thought of refusing, of saying, "Oh, you haven't enough for all in that flask—I'll quench my thirst in the brook." Manners, customs, traditions, habits: Haan had them all in a

stately, slow-flowing stream that drowned impulse or informality at birth. Corfield remembered wanly that when he first came to Haan, he had thought how pleasant it was to find such noble, time-encrusted courtesies surrounding everyday life; he had not then realised that custom could surround with ponderous grandeur the death of a planet.

S'sosh remarked idly, as he drank, "You are the second, friend Horfil, today. It is not often that your other Therran'ye leave their puzzles in that white building to visit our fields. Better for them perhaps if they did." He wiped ceremoniously first Corfield's mouth, then N'fath's with a bunch of minha leaves, and dropped them into the trickle of water that slid past him, chattering musically.

Corfield asked curiously, "Do you know his name, S'sosh? I did not know that anyone had planned to come and see your crops. They are not yet ready for more specimens, I think."

S'sosh shrugged. "It was a Therran I have seen but once before. In'oe! my wife's husband, says he came newly to you." In'oe! held a post which was something like that of town clerk, but which combined also the duties of information bureau and telegraph service. Some of the Haan'ha possessed noticeable telepathic powers. These were trained, and encouraged by interbreeding. S'sosh was held in some

respect by his fellows, for having dared to marry a wife whose children might also inherit such powers of communication. Messages were sent and received by such means over limited distances, more successfully than by the limited phonetic script which baldly expressed some of the more obvious nuances of the rich language.

"That would be Powers," said Corfield thoughtfully. "I wonder what he wanted here? I suppose he is improving his knowledge of Haan. He is what we call a trainee," he explained to the politely uncomprehending S'sosh.

"He is a servant of a great company—" he sighed. It was almost impossible to get over to one of the Haan'ha the concept of big business—"and this company works with the learned body that sent me, and lets them have money, and in turn we help some of their young men who must go and work on other worlds, and we give their people knowledge which they may use in turn to make more money, by selling the fruit of that knowledge to others. Powers will soon be going to other worlds, and now he is learning all he can about this one. In time he will know much about many worlds that will be of use to his company."

He thought, ironically, that the Board of Associated Universities (Interplanetary) that owned his services was in many ways as much a profit-making concern as

the Federated Interstellar Exploitation League, Powers' employer. He hoped that the Board could still be legitimately referred to as a learned body, but he had been away many years, and in view of some of their recent communications, he was becoming doubtful. Oh hell! To be out of the whole frustrating academic treadmill, with its dead ends, its exasperating non-sequiturs! Well, not too many years now, thank God! If he could get Haan off his plate.

It wasn't simply a question of being able to leave the wretched planet—that, in the nature of his work as a xenobotanist, was simple. He could leave when his work was over—when he had classified the native flora, studied it, and noted as fully as possible his conclusions, for the use of the Associated Universities (and, indirectly, for the Exploitation League), with recommendations for advice and assistance, wherever the natives of the planet concerned might be persuaded to accept these.

Persuaded. That was the relevant term. Force was never used, in interstellar dealings—except by the Interstellar Police, and they were in a category by themselves. Violence had almost died out nowadays, even in relatively backward planets. Man did not struggle with fellow-man, not any longer; and aliens he treated with even greater forbearance.

Alien races themselves, oddly enough, had proved, with one or

two exceptions, to be almost without the bloodlust that had done so much to thrust Homo Sapiens (var. Terra) on his power-crazed way towards the waiting stars. Alien hungers and passions were of other sorts, sometimes so different from human ones that there was no common field of comprehension; communication in certain directions became virtually impossible. How do you express, for instance, filial piety to a race that is born out of the death of a parent, since the living cells of the offspring can only be incubated in the rotting corpse of the elder being?

Corfield sighed, and rose. He had now spent as much time in the company of S'sosh and N'fath as was necessary, by polite habitude. N'fath would have to remain longer with S'sosh, since they were cousins. If they had been more closely related, the time for polite conversation would have been longer. And so on, and so on. Corfield found himself suddenly homesick for the brusque ways of impatient Terra, where a man gave you what time he could, and then summoned his secretary to show you out.

S'sosh, however, rose too. "I will accompany you, if my company is welcome," he offered. "It is just on my time to eat. If I leave it too long the food will be overcooked, if I am too soon, my wife will complain that I have not given her time enough. Her cooking is not very good."

"Why don't you suggest that she improve it?" asked Corfield unthinkingly.

"And insult the daughter of In'oe!" S'sosh was shocked. "Horfil, you know us better than that, stranger as you are. Besides," he added philosophically, "it is expected. There are a great many things that the daughters of In'oe and the other women of like races cannot do well. They are too clever at the great things to be good at the small ones."

Corfield smothered a laugh. He seemed to have heard very similar complaints to that back on Terra. He had once read a prehistoric author of Terra named Dickens, and he remembered a Mrs. Jellyby in one of the books who rather resembled S'sosh's wife, Fa'il.

"Why do you not halt your journey at my house and eat with us?" suggested S'sosh. "It is woodborer today. If Lesi is willing, that is." Corfield was being offered a chance of refusal, if he wished it. If S'sosh had meant to insist, the speech would have ended with a reference to Lesi's commands on the desirability of entertaining guests; Corfield refused, therefore, thankfully, with the polite sighs of renunciation that the invitation demanded.

S'sosh merely shrugged; it was N'fath, oddly, whose brow clouded. He said, "I eat with my cousins. We might have talked more. These stories you tell, of how the minha is growing less and

feebler—" he stopped, his face wrinkling with an inarticulate distress. To express doubt of the minha harvest was almost like blasphemy, but it was evident to Corfield that questions were forcing their way into the man's troubled mind. He saw with surprise from the expression of S'sosh, who was watching his cousin anxiously, that N'fath had been the originator of the idea that Corfield should eat with them.

He said on impulse, "Now I must go to my work. But it would be pleasing to me—and, no doubt, to Lesi—if you would both come to me after the meal and the ritual washing, and watch the sun descending to the minha plants." Haan was a little larger than Terra, its speed of rotation slightly greater; there was a bare two and a half Earth hours between the main midday meal and the onset of dusk.

N'fath drew a long breath, and said eagerly, "Ah, yes, yes!" S'sosh took Corfield's hands in his, and the two men began the elaborate ceremony of bidding farewell after a comparatively recent meeting. If they had been together for half the day, the ceremony would have been even longer and more elaborate.

Corfield was still wondering as he entered the laboratory why Powers had chosen to visit the minha field that day. He found Tresham, his chief assistant, bent over a couple of soil samples. Tresham's speciality was mi-

crofauna and microflora, and he looked the part. He was a small light-haired, neat-fingered middle-aged man, with a soft voice, and he brought an equal amount of skill and knowledge to both fields of his research, wide though they were. Corfield asked him if he had seen Powers that morning.

"Don't like that character," mumbled Tresham, busy with the scales. "Too young, too keen, too eager. Wants to go a-crusading. Wants to do everything better. Why can't he leave life be—makes me feel old and redundant."

"That's not an answer, Tom," said Corfield patiently. Tresham's world centered around tiny things—he found it difficult to bring himself into close contact with the larger world. Communication required real effort from him. Most of his reports needed reducing to coherence by others with time and patience to spare, but they were always worth it.

Tresham looked up, his grey eyes dim and dazed with peering. He rubbed them fretfully. "Oh, Powers, saw him at breakfast. Said he was going out. In the fields. Then he went." He turned back to his slides, mumbling, "Pestering poor wretched natives."

"Does he pester them?" asked Corfield mildly.

"Oh, Lord, yes." Tresham reached out and pushed one of the slides gently under a microscope with almost finicking care.

"What's that for? Well, why do you do it? Well, why does the priest say so? Well, how does he know? And so on, until he's practically asking them if they don't think it's disgraceful that adult Haan'ha can't mull themselves up a better type of civilization. Poor devils haven't a clue what he's talking about, think he's crazy, 'walking with the clouds' they call it. But just every once in a while he gets a reaction. There's a water-carrier, L'gon, and that fellow S'sosh—I've seen their eyes turn round in their heads listening to him. Then they get themselves a worried look and walk around as if their last meal had disagreed with them. Damned do-gooder! Agitator, if you want to know what I think." Tresham was silent, his eye squinting down into the microscope, his lips moving.

Corfield was silent, too. He stood looking out into the landscape of blue and soft moving green and patchy scuds of white, and his face was worried.

N'FATH AND S'sosh were sitting without word or motion on the steps of the laboratory, when he opened the door at sunset. The quick bright stars of Haan rushed crowded into the dark sky the moment the tiny sun resigned its seat. The purple minha plants looked black now, as they stood peacefully and alone, and bereft of the day's busy horde of workers.

There were the usual preliminaries of ecstatic surprise, of

unworthiness, of formal renunciation of the right to be seated. Finally N'fath said morosely, "Today I have seen a minha plant that was—" he looked round and lowered his voice "bent and warped, wizened like some tiny old man."

Corfield said nothing. S'sosh murmured, "It has happened once or twice in the memories of our generation, cousin."

N'fath made a movement almost of violence. "It happens more and more. Horfil has said so. Horfil is our friend." His voice became louder. "And Fhowersh is our friend also, and the friend of all young people who are anxious about things that are not right. He told us this."

Corfield stirred at the mention of Powers name, and said, "He is a very young man himself, N'fath, and because he is an Earthman—a Terran—it does not necessarily mean that he has as much wisdom as any of your old men."

S'sosh said meditatively, "Lesi would be angry at many things, were he here today. The minha does not grow well always. The priests do not know why and say that it does not matter. And now the young men and the children are beginning to question." He shifted his legs, unhappily. "I even begin to question myself. And so does N'fath—and some others. It is because we have seen what wisdom you Therran'ye possess that we are rendered—" he hesitated and then said defiantly "—discontented". It was a word

which had hardly any place in the Haan tongue, when used of a man or woman. It was reserved strictly for the use of Lesi.

"Flowersh says we should alter these things," mumbled N'fath. "He says we have the powers, we are the people, the priests should sometimes listen and hear when we say what we think is good."

Corfield stiffened. "That is not comfortable speech either for one of the Haan'ha or the Therran'ye," he said evenly. "Your laws are good, and your priests are good—if they would only listen to us in certain matters in which we can help them. Lesi would understand that this is for the best, and Lesi would wish it."

"What would Lesi wish?" A figure moved out of the darkness, and settled lithely on the bottom step. We'ya had come to listen or to offer advice or perhaps merely to pass the time. Corfield, who could never be certain whether she was mocking him with her solemn respectful face, flushed a little as he heard her voice. The men offered her the usual courtesies extended to women of good rank, and N'fath briefly explained what they had been discussing. We'ya was decisive.

"Certainly the Therran'ye are right. We know that the minha grow less strong every year, and that some of its substance departs. Are not our women and children ill more often than they used to be?" Corfield nodded silently. He too had noticed traces of mineral

deficiencies in diet in the people of the planet. "Then we should accept advice, and change our methods while there is still time." We'ya snapped her mouth shut, as if there was no more to be said.

S'sosh said, "You are a priest's daughter. If you say this, then—"

"If I say this, then others will listen," interrupted We'ya. "And in time they will say so, too."

Corfield suffered a wry amusement as the mobile mouth of the Haani woman twisted decisively at the corners. Women were very much the same the galaxy over.

"I interpret, and I make far speech with other far speakers."

The two men bent respectful heads at their countrywoman. The telepaths of Haan were a tightly-knit, closely sympathetic group. Many of them were women; and though they had no direct say in the government of Haan, their influence was a major factor. We'ya could communicate over greater distances than most of her colleagues on the planet.

"And I tell you that others already say so. The speakers know in other places and have heard, and they have told me."

Corfield raised his eyebrows and said seriously, "We'ya, do you mean that others begin to talk of unhappiness about the minha?"

"Not of unhappiness about the minha, only." We'ya stretched catlike, and her fingers gave little nervous flicks of emphasis as she talked. "They speak thus: they say, the Therran'ye are wise, they

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fly from world to world. They have seen many worlds. They have much knowledge. They have made some of these worlds better with their knowledge. This we have been told, not only by you, Horfil, but by other races, the Ferrin'ye (Rigellians), and the Afathar'ye (Arcturans). The priests do not listen. The priests do not want changes. We Haan'ha do not like change. But if the minha plants are—are wrong," she faltered for a moment, and dropped to a whisper, "then are the priests, in a different way, wrong also?"

Corfield did not speak. The knowledge that unrest was beginning on this planet of all planets shook him more than he cared to admit, and momentarily he was filled with a wild hope. Could there possibly be a chance of bringing the priests, through the desires of admittedly less intelligent, but more practical commoners, to see their error? And not only priests, but leaders, like In'oel?

He relaxed tiredly. He should have known better than to get caught in an upthrust of foolish optimism. Haan was Haan. It might change—indeed, it was almost impossible by the criteria of standard galactic development that it should not—but it would change in its own time. He would never see it. He would be sitting at home on a neat little pension, shaking a white head and mumbling to himself, visiting the univer-

sity library, and writing monographs that nobody would read.

We'ya was saying imperiously to S'sosh and N'fath, "If Horfil will excuse us, I have something I wish to say to both of you, on our way home." The three of them turned to bid Corfield a long elaborate farewell, full of gestures and nuances. Corfield wondered if it were merely fatigue and an over-active nervous system that led him to see almost an impatience and a brevity, skimping the usual length of the ceremony.

He walked across to the sleeping-quarters, so preoccupied that he did not at first see the man who stood lounging against one wall of the building, smoking a distinctively Terran cigar.

"Evening, Mr. Corfield." The slightly harsh, excitable voice made him look up. It was Powers.

"Oh, hullo, Powers. Had a good day?"

"Hm. Oh, yeah, could be worse. But, you know something, Mr. Corfield—say, I'll have to get in the way of calling you Professor, only darned if it doesn't slip my mind all of the time—you know, if I had to stick around those fellows the rest of my life, I'd get ulcers from sheer frustration."

Corfield said, "what exactly is worrying you?"

"Oh, every single little thing I see. Why in hell they can't get stuck in building 'emself a decent slice of planet beats me—they got troubles with the

minha, they got troubles with the priests, they got more sickness this year than they've ever seen in a lifetime before, and here you stick out a hand and say, 'okay, Joe, we got the cure for your troubles, and it'll cost you sweet nothing until you're way out of the wood, and what d'you know? They're not having any. Lesi wouldn't like it."

Corfield shrugged. "You must have met that attitude before on backward planets, in one form or another."

"I guess I haven't that much experience, but I'd be willing to bet ten credits there isn't a single planet in the galaxy with this much dam cussedness. Say, what do you reckon that Lesi of theirs was, anyway? Must have been a pretty queer kind of a creature. Set itself to digging a primitive race out of their holes, and turned 'em into gardeners, trained the minha from what it was, a weed, into the staple commodity of a planet, lived here for Lord know how long, and then blew itself up in Fral'ha'fral, just as it was beginning to see results."

Corfield lit a cigarette, and stretched out an idle hand to pick two or three long orange petals from an awial vine which trailed across the silicoid wall of the building. He passed them across the burning tip of his cigarette, producing a pleasant, faintly astringent scent, as the frail wisps crumbled and withered in the heat. "I don't suppose Lesi blew

itself up on purpose."

"Well, no, but it sure is a pity it didn't live to instil a little something in the way of guts into these Haan'ha. They haven't an idea in their heads, most of them, bar doing what the old guys in the robes say. Mind, there's one or two I've spoken to, who aren't too pleased with life the way it is. They don't like the way the minha are going, and they're darn worried about the sickness. I'll swear I saw a woman with a case of something like goitre in a small township not so far away. They were boarding the house up, and her family were staying in there with her. They'll pass food up on the end of a long pole, I guess. They're scared witless of anything like that. They're too soft. Look at the speech—not a hard sound or a decent crisp consonant in it. Think they're degenerating? For my money, they're a dead ringer for those old Polynesians they used to have back on Terra, before the whole lot died out."

"If you think you're going to get them to see the error of their ways, you're wrong," said Corfield with finality. "I've spent more years than I like to think of trying just that."

"Maybe," muttered Powers, straightening craggy shoulders, "but I'd sure like to take a crack at it. Some of the young ones—"

Corfield threw his cigarette away, suddenly disliking the taste. He watched the spark arch over

against the greater pricks of light that spangled the velvet sky, and said, "The younger ones don't really count. They may begin to one day, but now the priests and town leaders have the say. And at the end of every argument—when they have any—the younger ones courteously give way to age and knowledge and custom. This is such a damned polite planet," he finished in sudden irritation.

"Yeah," said Powers on a long breath, "but all the same—" he swung off at a tangent suddenly—"I picked up a few tricks from the Root-and-Branch boys when I was younger, that N'fath seemed mighty interested in."

Corfield stiffened, his attention fixed suddenly and coldly. He said sharply, "You were one of the Fundamental Group?" He hadn't thought about them for a long time. Roughly, they were a mixture of old fanatics and young hooligans. Their motto had been 'Whatever it is, I'm agin' it', and their methods had been short and rough. They had had a fairly wide following in the Solar System, and had spread out to other star-groups, with some of the younger spacemen who had been followers of the creed.

"Oh, nothing serious." Powers waved a hand largely. "Nothing that's ever counted against me on the way up. Guess some of the old men on the Board'd rather you've sown a few wild oats. Then they don't have to sit about wondering when you'll get around to

it."

"So that's where N'fath has been getting some of his ideas and encouragement?" The words were slow and distasteful in Corfield's mouth. "Your idea is to foment some sort of crazy revolt among the Haan'ha—prick them into turning round and asking for an accounting from their leaders. Then when you've got everything into a nicely calculated state of chaos, you step in and hand them the gifts from Terra—or rather, the Associated Universities, do, humble and thankful to Clarry Powers for his intervention—and everybody lives happily ever after. Thank the Lord you're too much of a wild-eyed visionary to make a go of it."

"Not so damned wild-eyed!"

Powers retorted hotly, stung by the almost lazy contempt in Corfield's tone. "I got one or two ideas that—but you wouldn't be interested in that. Who the hell's side're you on, anyway? Don't you want to see this crazy planet make the grade? The only way it'll ever get to do it is through some guy planting a hefty kick just where it's needed!"

Whose side *was* he on? Corfield accepted, as he prepared for bed later, that he couldn't have answered that question himself. Yes, he wanted to see Haan accept Terran aid and knowledge. He wanted to see the *minha* safe for the centuries to come, and the way of life that went with it. But at the moment it was looking very

much as if the two things were fighting one another. A change of mind that meant acceptance of Terra's gifts would mean a shaking-up of the entire planet, an upheaval of all that was old and placid and admirable in Haan's existence—the final departure of all the laws that Lesi had laid down for his adopted people to follow.

It wasn't until some days later, that he began to realise that he might have underestimated Powers' capacity for stirring up trouble on the surface of Haan.

He was awakened, after a night of restlessness and dry-mouthed unpleasant dreams, by a totally unbelievable noise under his window; or not far away from it, he thought dizzily, as he wavered out of bed. It was the sound of angry voices in a crowd—and this was something that simply did not happen on equable Haan. People were not angry—or if they were, they did not show it. A mob was quite unthinkable.

He dressed, swallowed a Benzidisc, and went downstairs. A few hundred yards away, he could see Powers and Tresham and several white-coated laboratory assistants, looking very much as if the white coats had been pulled on over rumpled pyjamas. Surrounding them were several dozen Haani men and women, their usual soft voices and fluid gestures submerged in a flood of sharp shrill anger and a forest of waving arms.

Tresham, seeing Corfield, raised his voice and one hand. "Something badly wrong with the minha. They want to know what to do. Haven't even called the priest in yet." He grimaced, and Corfield felt a sudden sharp contraction of excitement. If it was something not too serious, and if they could begin to deal with it before the priests arrived—it might be the thin end of the wedge, and perhaps even now, he could neatly stamp 'Concluded' across his mental file for Haan, before he was relegated to the chair and desk brigade.

But when they came to the field, half-a-dozen priests, Ar'hu among them, were silently looking out across the broad swathes of ruin that some agency had ploughed in the fields of minha; one glance at that damage told Corfield that nothing but discredit could be earned by attempts to put it right.

Tresham left the now silent crowd, and walked a little way into the field. He stirred some of the dead and dying plants with his toe, and then walked back to Corfield. He kept his face carefully impassive, and a great sigh went up, the death-sigh of hope in the waiting Haan'ha. The sun went behind a soft patch of cloud, and the light dulled on their smooth greenish skins, as it died in their eyes.

Tresham said beneath his breath to Corfield, carefully not speaking Haani, "I'd say carbolic

acid might do that."

This was very much worse than anything Corfield could have expected. "Powers!" he muttered. "It must be! No one else could—"

"Or would." Tresham nodded. "Powers, yes, and perhaps one or two of the local lads. What do you do if they guess? That old fellow Ar'hui's no fool."

"No," said Corfield slowly, "No, he's no fool; but his intelligence is more or less uni-directional. Listen."

They could hear low-voiced conversation coming from the priests, and then the group round them joined in. Whispers flew from mouth to mouth, and then someone said quite loudly, "Lesi!" and a moan answered him, "Lesi is angry."

"That's it, then," said Tresham, almost with satisfaction. "They've worked it out. Lesi's angry. That'll do them for a while." He shook himself, and turned back towards the research buildings. Then he stopped and looked over his shoulder at Corfield. "What're you going to do about that damned fool, Powers?"

"Ask the League for an enquiry; and shut Powers up out of harm's way in the meantime," said Corfield definitely. "I've the right to do that if any trainee is endangering our work in the field." Tresham nodded, and shambled off.

Corfield could see We'ya a few yards away, braced against the scud of morning breeze, slim and

straight. He wanted badly to go and talk to her, but the fear of what he might find out stopped him, and aching he turned back to his own work.

CORFIELD'S one-man gravhopper developed engine trouble while he was paying his monthly visit to the branch laboratory at Fral'ha'fral. Fortunately, the workshop there had both equipment and skill to repair it; while the mechanics swarmed over the tiny ship, he walked out, with the sheaf of reports he had been to collect, to the edge of the great silent glass plain that had been a very ancient city.

Had been, that its, until some unthinkable blast had levelled and melted and twisted all its area into uncanny rainbow beauty. He looked across at the towers of the central temple of the town which had been built with respect at a correct distance from its original. He could hear the sharp musical sounds of the great wooden mobiles that hung and clicked in the hollows of the towers—and he could hear something else—something that sounded like the thick angry noise, the pounding run of a mob.

Smoke, black and sullen, began to rise from somewhere in a spiral. A heavy concussion resounded into his eardrums and dizzied him, made him bite his tongue with shock. That was not the mild explosion of the substances the Haan'ha used to root

out their stumps and rocks! It was something more vicious, more dangerous altogether. He began to run in the direction of the temple. He thought he could see flames now, but the dips and hummocks in the crystalline desert slid beneath his feet and tricked his steps. They flamed at him under the dazzling sun and made his head ache.

"But how—?" he thought. "Is that more of our stuff? Powers! Of course! He came here with me several times, watching the staff at work. Sometimes he wandered off. He must have talked to people here too, and perhaps some of the telepaths—" His eyes were playing him tricks. He could not see quite clearly, though he was sure that tall tongues of fire rose menacingly out of the Central Temple. The discontent must really have broken loose—and the priests? God knew what angry and frightened commoners, sure of Lesi's disapproval, might be doing to their discredited leaders. What cool, glorious, translucent shades there were among these pits of glass! He found that he could not think carefully about what the mob might be doing. He was too anxious to explore this beautiful new terrain. Strange, how flat and endless the place had looked from the edge; yet, when you entered it, there were new turns, sculptured, lifted dunes, hidden sweeping valleys at every step.

It was almost impossible to decide at which point he walked up-

hill, at which point down. The horizon had vanished now into a confusion of soft serpentine shapes. The pressures and tensions of a new space seemed to sing within him. There was a sounding in his ears, almost a beckoning call, as if something wanted him to come onward. It was most important. The temple and the riots could wait. The rainbow glass folded round him like walls, and a streaming coloured light was rushing at him from all directions—was it a light, or a wind, or singing? He could not tell. There was a passage now, and the floor sank gently beneath his feet, though he did not know if he moved, or it moved, taking him with it.

The sound at his ears rose to a climax, pitched and broke like a plucked string with something laid across it. Before him was a great cavern of light and colour, and he could not move. He was aware of broken things, of a barrier that hummed and sang, and beyond the barrier—something else.

Something that moved and was alive and—by some means he knew—in pain. It was not a shape that he or any humanoid being could have recognized; but he understood power and knowledge and an utter unlikeness to anything he had ever met before. He was half aware that communication was being made. His own mind translated the stream into words.

"—so difficult. Very weak, and

like you, you humans, receive better than I transmit. Cannot influence my people."

"Your people? You are *Lesi*?" his dazed mind said soundlessly.

Something like laughter made its way through booming, dazing channels of movement. "We live so much longer. The explosion—a few weeks to me. I die soon, though. I have food and warmth for far more time than is left to me. Cannot get out. Or change what happens. I was wrong. This was like a—" the image was unintelligible "—I cared for it. It grew. Then, when I was cut off, it became static. The people will die, except for change. But you from Earth—Terra, is it?—I could call a little when near."

Twenty, twenty-five thousand years dying, thought Corfield numbly, and only the small, latter part of a lifetime. What creatures were these?

The warm rich stream of consciousness entwined in his seemed to become impatient. "Now only a few minutes perhaps for me—for you longer. I know your sun and its movements. We were there—we saw your solar system spawned, muddy planets hesitate and spin for the first time. I am a long way from that time and place—I grow weary for the song of the purple spires, the long conversation of seas, the feathered hands of the servants—" the stream thinned, dwindled, and for a moment was lost in an immense exhaustion, so that Corfield stag-

gered as he stood beneath the weary weight in his mind.

Then the thoughts came again, "One Terran I called. He was the one to change this planet. Now I tell you. You might stop him. The will was there in him, and the other will is in you. Do not stop him. The world must grow. I die under the desert of glass, but I have done nothing for many of their generations. I could not reach them. Only, as each was born, it lived and grew in the assurance that I was there, and so they kept my laws, which are now wrong for them. They did not need faith, they had surety. Now Powers will destroy that surety—and you will let him, for I shall put it into your mind. Afterwards you will forget. Already it is begun. Men grow new shoots on the ground which has been burnt off to make that new growth better. And only those pictures in the city may wake something in your mind that you cannot quite remember."

Corfield tried to move his feet, to shout, to kill the dreams that seemed rising all about him; but the barrier vibrated more strongly, the thing beyond seemed to move more feebly and more distantly. The rainbow sheets came between his senses and the reality for which they grasped, and at last the only thing left to him was the regular pulse of his blood in his ears, and the stolid movement of his feet, as they plodded, carrying him to the

(cont. on page 81)

Robert Young, whose stories are fast becoming mainstays for us, achieves a remarkable diversity of both mood and content with each of his appearances here. This time he describes the breakdown of reality which occurs when an astronaut confronts the—

LORD OF RAYS

ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrated by RICHARD OLSEN

LT. COMDR. GUEST sighted the Unorthodox Orbiting Object less than five hours before the Helios 5 was scheduled to break solar orbit and head for home. Or for where home would be, come next year. Two hours remained before final Burn.

Guest had buried his co-astronaut, Comdr. Avery, on the other side of the sun. Avery had died of uremia. Guest had sat by and watched him die, not knowing what to do till Moonbase checked out Avery's symptoms, made the diagnosis and paradioed the appropriate instructions. By then, it was too late.

Probably it would have been too late anyway.

So Guest had buried Avery in the Solar Sea. His buddy. Nights were gray since he went away. His buddy.

Actually, he had hated Avery. Not in the beginning. In the beginning they had been fast

friends. Not till six months after sunlaunch had the first shoots of hatred broken the soil of Guest's brain. It had grown like a noxious weed, poisoning everything he said.

In retrospect he realized that he couldn't have avoided hating Avery, any more than Avery had been able to avoid hating him. There should have been three men in the tub, like the rhyme went—not two. But both limitation of living space and conservation of energy had said No.

Since Avery's death, Guest had hated himself. There was no one else available.

The UOO lay about an eighth of a mile off the Helios 5's prow on the sunward side. He centered it on the control-panel viewscreen and described it to Moonbase: Some thirty feet long by perhaps eight wide; upturned at both ends like a two-toed Persian slipper. Apparently constructed of wood. (*Wood?*) A bench situated mid-

ships with a masked figure lying on it. Two other figures, indubitably statues, one stationed at the prone figure's head, the other at its feet. Décor: a riot of reds, yellows, blues.

MOONBASE: "Get closer, Andy. Lock one of the cameras on it."

HELIOS 5: "Right."

Guest got busy on manual. He shrank the Helios 5's orbit with a brief burst of retro-fire, and by means of a series of attitude maneuvers brought her directly behind and within fifty feet of the UOO. He programmed the A.P. to maintain the relationship, then crawled into the forward control cubicle and focused the prow television camera and put it on automatic. The outer hull of the Helios 5 was analogous to a one-way mirror, its exterior surface constituting the mirror-side, its heavily tinted inner surface the transparent side. By rotating at a predetermined speed, it maintained an interior ship's temperature of 65° F.

The picture being beamed back to Moonbase registered on the forward cubicle monitor screen. Despite the glare of the sun, it was clear and detailed. The masked figure lying on the bench was swathed with strips of white linen, or its equivalent. It was that of a man—a dead man. The bench, unquestionably, was a bier; the statues posted at either end of it were those of young women. Both had banged black hair that fell below their shoul-

ders, and both wore simple tunic-like dresses.

A pair of cumbersome wooden oars swept down at 45° angles aft of the bier, and stationed between them was a third statue. That of the helmsman.

Charon?

Guest got hold of himself. This was Space—not the Styx.

MOONBASE: "We thought you might have been hallucinating, Andy. It appears you weren't. Keep the damn thing on camera—we're going to try to contact a good Egyptologist."

HELIOS 5: "Why an Egyptologist?"

MOONBASE: "All of us are pretty much agreed that what we're viewing on our screens is an Egyptian sun boat. You know—the boats they used to put in pharaohs' tombs so the old boys could accompany the sun god Ra on his underworld travels."

HELIOS 5: "That's preposterous!"

MOONBASE: "Utterly. And in every conceivable way. We'll get back to you presently."

GUEST RETURNED to the Helios 5's living room. That was what he called the main control-room. It was mostly gauges, dials and computer banks, and instruments for studying the sun; but a chart table bolted to the deck lent a homey touch, while the main porthole on the sunward side had something of the aspect of a color TV screen. Trouble was, there was only one program. Moreover, the

porthole was a tricky little devil: its heavily tinted glass minimized the main character so that it could be seen *in toto* on what at most would have approximated a 24" screen. The purpose of this was practical as well as psychological. At such close range, the sun was not only awesome to behold but could be beheld *in toto* only by the instruments situated in the hull. This way, Guest could view the entire body and simultaneously not be reminded of his proximity to potential perdition.

He sat down in his "armchair"—his half of the co-astronaut chair-couch (he wouldn't have dreamed of occupying Avery's half)—and activated the control-panel monitor screen. Once again, the UOO swam into his ken. He stared at it glumly. He should have been elated to have run across something that promised to relieve the monotony of his days and nights. He wasn't: he was too depressed.

He'd been depressed ever since Avery's death. No, long before. Avery's death had merely exacerbated the condition by directing his hatred back upon himself. He'd tried once or twice to redirect some of it toward Moonbase: but Moonbase was too remote, too impersonal.

ON THE BLACK TRUNK of the star-bedight tree of space someone has carved a big misshapen heart and within its boundaries engraved the legend, A.G. *hates*

A.G.

Guest, hating, glances sideways at the "color TV-screen". The character of the only character of the play has subtly changed. It is a simple golden disk now, a beautiful golden disk, its rays distinctly individualized, two of the lower ones curving downward and terminating in a pair of tiny hands—

"Hail, thou Disk, thou Lord of Rays. Hail, Divine Aton! May I not be shut up in the tomb, may I not be turned back, may the limbs of my body be made new again when I view thy beauties, because I am one of those who worshipped thee on Earth . . ."

SHOCKED, Guest gripped the armrests of his chair-couch. The strange words had issued from his own mouth, originated in his own brain.

Lord of Rays. Divine Aton.

Terrified, he glanced at the "color TV-screen" again. Sol had shed its tiny hands and resumed its normal countenance.

For how long?

Guest glared at the UOO. "Burn, damn you!" he said. "Incinerate the way wood should when exposed to such hellish heat!" he shouted. "Go away!" he screamed.

The UOO continued serenely along its orbital path as though it had as much business being there as the Helios 5 did.

Naturally it couldn't have burned even if it had wanted to.

But exposed to such intense heat it should have shrunk, warped, disintegrated or done something. Assuming it really was made out of wood. And the figure lying on the bier—it couldn't possibly have withstood such heat for more than a few seconds without *some* change taking place.

Guest stared at the figure. You didn't need to be an Egyptologist to have at least a minimum of knowledge about ancient Egyptian burial customs. Guest had read about mummies: about pharaohs and lesser luminaries being sealed in their tombs along with their silly sun boats and their naive convictions of an afterlife via their ka. Of a reunion with their sun-god Ra. The figure lying on the bier was a dead ringer for a mummy. However, if its ka was anywhere in the vicinity, it wasn't discernible.

Angrily, Guest straightened out his thoughts. If the UOO was a sun boat, then it was an imitation of the real thing and had been placed in solar orbit not by bronze-age barbarians who hadn't known what a wheel was but by a bunch of tech-age practical jokers who had somehow managed to beat ISA to the Solar Sea.

He had a bite to eat, took a mild tranquillizer and dozed.

MOONBASE: "Andy, you there?"

HELIOS 5: "Where in hell else would I be?"

MOONBASE: "Easy, old buddy. Final Burn's hardly an hour away."

In less time than you know it, you'll be on your way home. Meantime, some info: We've contacted an Egyptologist, tuned him in on your Space Program, and he's confirmed our suspicion. Your UOO's a sun boat beyond peradventure of a doubt."

HELIOS 5: "But it can't be a *real* sun boat!"

MOONBASE: "Whether it can be or can't be, we have to proceed on the assumption that it is until we can come up with a better answer. Okay: our Egyptologist says that the figure on the bier may quite possibly be a dignitary from the days of Ikhnaton, King Tut's father-in-law. He admits this is an educated guess based on Ikhnaton's throwing out henotheism in favor of monotheism as personified by Ra-Horakhte, or Aton, and that during that particular dynasty—the Eighteenth—sun-worship, while not particularly popular with the populace, was officially in. He says there's no chance of its being Ikhnaton's boat because his would've been bigger and far more elaborate. Addendum: The figure's mask is the mask of Osiris: it was standard operating procedure for anyone bound for the Afterlife to wear such a mask. The two female statues are those of Isis and Nephthys respectively. Isis was Osiris' wife and sister; Nephthys was just his sister. Now, as to how the damned boat got there—"

HELIOS 5: "There's only one way

it could've got here! A bunch of practical jokers put it here to belittle us!"

MOONBASE: "You know better than that, Andy. Granted, it could have been launched into orbit from a conventional craft. But it would've had to have been a terrestrial conventional craft and the only terrestrial conventional craft that have got that close to the sun have been the Helios's 1, 2, 3 and 4, all of which were unmanned and none of which was large enough or powerful enough to have done the job in any case. Besides which, ISA's not in the habit of playing belittling practical jokes on itself."

HELIOS 5: "So you don't know how it got here."

MOONBASE: "At the moment—no. But we have a team of ontologists working on the problem."

HELIOS 5: "Why ontologists?"

MOONBASE: "Because we're confronted with a phenomenon that demands a new approach to reality. The boat is there; its presence can't be accounted for by orthodox means; therefore it must be accounted for by unorthodox means. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than we have ever dreamed of in our technology."

"As soon as we have something, we'll get back to you posthaste. Meantime, keep the camera running. Take care."

GUEST GOT UP from his

"armchair" and half walked-half drifted back into the tiny rec compartment where the entertainment tapes were kept. He couldn't find a damned one even remotely connected with ancient Egypt.

It figured.

On his mother's side he had a smidgin of Egyptian blood. Could that have accounted for the strange words he'd uttered? Dormant DNA patterns awakened by the sight of the sun boat?

Guest didn't believe it. Real problems never lent themselves to pat solutions. To solve a real problem you had to fight your way through thousands of scientific sacred cows.

Maybe Moonbase was right in trying to outflank the omnipresent herd.

When Guest returned to the control room he found that he had a visitor. The visitor was a slight dark-skinned man wearing an elaborate headdress, a short white skirt and sandals fashioned of interwoven reeds. He held an unrolled papyrus before him and was reading from it. He didn't seem to be aware of Guest's presence. The language was one Guest wasn't even faintly familiar with, although he guessed from the visitor's appearance that he was hearing words written millennia ago and deduced from the manner in which they were being spoken that they constituted an invocation of some kind. The visitor read for a while longer, then rerolled the

papyrus and vanished.

Time lag was triple its usual length after Guest reported the incident to Moonbase. Then: MOONBASE: "We've consulted our Egyptologist, Andy. He says you've just given us a pretty good description of one of the major characters in *The Book of the Dead*."

HELIOS 5: "That's reassuring as hell!"

MOONBASE: "We're not trying to reassure you, Andy. We're giving everything to you straight because prior experience in space has taught that a spaceman's major enemy is the unknown. Once anything ceases to be unknown, he has a chance at least to cope with it. Granted, we don't know how your visitor got on board, to say nothing of how he traveled millions of miles through space and thousands of years through time; but at least we know approximately where and when he came from, and now you do too. We also know, thanks to our Egyptologist, that the papyrus he read from was *The Book of the Dead* itself, and we're reasonably sure that the particular passage he read was one of those designed to ensure the deceased's safe entry into the Boat of Ra."

HELIOS 5: "But you don't know *why* he read it."

MOONBASE: "No. But our team of ontologists are working on it. Just hang on, Andy. We'll get back to you as soon as possible."

GUEST HUNG ON. To the armrests of his chair-couch. He hung on tightly because he wanted with all his being to get up and go over to the chart table and lie down upon its smooth surface.

He looked at the control-panel chronometer. Forty-two minutes to final Burn.

He glanced at the "color TV-screen". He wished he hadn't. Sol had transmuted to a golden disk again with humanoid hands.

Aton.

"Hail, thou Disk, thou Lord of Rays," he heard himself say. "Hail, thou Great God who art in thy boat, bring thou me into thy boat."

Thirty-six minutes to Burn.

At length he realized that holding tight to the arm-rests wasn't enough, that he was going to get up anyway and compose his body upon the table. He half walked-half drifted. Carefully he composed himself upon his bier. His visitor, he realized, had returned and was standing above him, holding *The Book of the Dead*. This time, Guest understood the words, even though the language they were intoned in was as unfamiliar as before. He had begun intoning the passage himself a few minutes ago; now it was being delivered for him, as was proper:

"Hail, thou Great God who art in thy boat, bring thou me into thy boat. Let me be the director of thy journeyings and let me be among those who belong to thee and who are among the stars that

never rest. The things which are an abomination unto thee and the things that are an abomination unto me I will not eat, that which is an abomination unto thee and which is an abomination unto me is filth and I will not eat thereof, but sepulchral offerings and holy food will I eat, and I shall not be overthrown thereby—"

After completing the incantation, the chancellor-in-chief rolled the papyrus, deposited it upon Guest's chest and departed.

MOONBASE: "Greetings, Andy. Listen carefully. Our team of ontologists have concluded that the present phase of the Helios 5's orbit constitutes an interface—in this case, a common boundary of two realities, Reality One being the physical universe, Reality Two being the non-physical underworld as envisioned by the ancient Egyptians. Reality Two, the ontologists insist, is as valid as Reality one, since both are subjective interpretations of the Noumenon. Your situation is critical and presents two grave possibilities. Possibility One: since some of the traits of both realities are present in the interface, Reality Two may at any moment totally dominate Reality One. Possibility Two: the Helios 5's orbital path may leave Reality One completely and enter Reality Two. In either eventuality, the result will be the same: your status as a living being will be altered.

"Fortunately, less than thirty minutes remain before final Burn:

the thrust should see you safely out of your predicament. But you've got to hang on till then, Andy: if you don't make the Burn you'll remain in orbit forever and it'll no longer make any difference which reality you're in.

"Your best bet is distraction. Keep your mind busy. Play entertainment tapes, watch dirty movies (I know you and Avery sneaked some on board); think of Earth, think of when you were a kid climbing into an apple tree. Whatever you do, don't look at the sun boat, and no matter what happens, *don't look at the sun!*

"Andy?"

MOONBASE: "Helios 5, are you there?"

MOONBASE: "Helios 5, come in."

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WESTBURY, NEW YORK 11590

MOONBASE: "Come in, Helios 5."

MOONBASE: "Andy! Andy! For God's sake, come home!"

—ROBERT F. YOUNG

The Way of Fathers (cont. from page 73)

surface of Haan, and to whatever might be waiting for him there. To the faces of friends who were no longer friends, to furrows that were trampled and scorched, to

the blood, and ruin; and riot that marked the rising of the new laws of Lesi.

—DAPHNE CASTELL

**FROM THE WORLDS LARGEST PUBLISHER
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Linda Isaacs made her professional debut last year in the pages of the late If magazine. In her first appearance here, she turns her attention to one consequence of achieving every housewife's dream, a home which is—

FULLY AUTOMATED WITH LOW DOWN PAYMENT

LINDA ISAACS

Illustrated by LAURENCE KAMP

THE REFRIGERATOR opened, and a hand reached out. It gave me a glass of milk!

"Fenton!" I screamed. "Fenton, come in here!"

Fenton took his sweet time, but finally he came in from the dining room. I was white and trembling against the counter, unable to move, but I don't think he noticed. The room glistened with the pristine cleanliness typical of new kitchens, and radiated an air of innocence as if nothing unusual had happened.

"Do you see this?" I asked, holding out the glass. "Do you know how I got it?"

He took his chrome-rimmed glasses out of his shirt pocket and put them on carefully. He was too fat, way too fat. But he never listened to me—oh, no. Eat, eat.

He had a round face with dark eyes and thick brows like two bushy caterpillars. His dark-brown handlebar mustache that had taken months to grow gave him the appearance of an old-time bandito. But he was too fat and I never let him forget it.

He took the glass and examined it carefully, turning it in his hand and holding it to the light. At last he laid it on the polished amber counter and turned to me.

"It's just a glass of milk," he said patiently, "out of the refrigerator."

I knew he was being condescending, but I was too upset to go into that. "The refrigerator gave it to me, Fenton. An arm came out and gave it to me."

He smiled what little smile he could force between those swollen

cheeks and went to the copper-colored refrigerator. "This is a precision instrument, Alma. All the appliances in the house are—that's why we bought it."

It was true; the house was fully automated, but the refrigerator was one of the anachronisms I had wanted for the kitchen. It reminded me of the old days when every home had refrigerators and stoves.

He centered himself in front of the unit and it opened with a click. "You see, it's the kind that opens by thought direction."

"But Fenton, an arm, a *human arm*, came out of there." I peered over his shoulder into the gleaming white interior, searching among the containers, around the ketchup, inside the clear-topped vegetable drawer. But there was nothing unusual in there.

Fenton laughed—I hadn't heard Fenton laugh in a long time. "I'm thinking I'd like the ketchup," he said. "Now watch."

At once a long, narrow slot slid open in the back wall of glowing whiteness; a spindling chrome prosthetic arm extruded itself and poked around among the containers. At last it found the short, fat ketchup bottle, and grasping stainless-steel fingers brought it carefully to Fenton's hand.

But I wasn't going to let him put me off like that—I knew what I'd seen. "It was a *human arm*, Fenton. I swear, it came right out and . . ."

But Fenton wasn't listening. He



had a maddening habit of ignoring me when I talked to him and he walked out mumbling something about my going daffy in my middle age.

I avoided the refrigerator after that because Fenton wouldn't let me have it disconnected. He got his own food out of there and I used the meal receiver, although it cost more to use. But Fenton didn't show much understanding in view of what happened.

Things went like that for about a week. I busied myself with my jewelry engraving, which I sell by mail, and there was nothing to bother me—the house did everything.

And then the oven spoke to me. It was a regular old-fashioned oven—there were timing gadgets on it and self-cleaning cycles as well as a serving unit and a cooking memory. But I couldn't find any voice attachment.

I was scrambling some eggs at the time and admiring my cooking proficiency, when the little window in the oven door turned rubbery and flexible. I saw it from the corner of my eye and jumped back as if I'd been burned. I still held the fork, dripping egg on the shiny lemon-colored floor, and I stood there staring at that little window.

It moved just like a mouth and damn if the burner knobs didn't look like eyes. The sound seemed to come out of the top burners.

"Your egg will be too hard at this temperature," it said as if

enunciating for a speech class. Its voice was metallic and hard.

I threw down the fork and ran out of there.

"Fenton! Fenton." I'd forgotten he was at work, but if he had been there, it wouldn't have made much difference. He wouldn't have believed me anyway. I called the police.

It's amazing how people will act like you're crazy if you tell them something strange. When the police got there, I was sitting on the front step because I didn't want to go into my new house alone—my beautiful new house that I had wanted for ten years.

It was a beautiful rambling house, authentic of the last century except the white wooden siding had been replaced with plastic. It was the kind of house they built long ago, with a front porch and a back veranda—except now every modern convenience had been installed. There were giant rose bushes bordering the porch and brilliant orange flowers growing along the edges of the property.

A small wizened man got out of the police craft and made his way up the walk. The house was about fifty yards off the road and there were grey flagstone insets that led up to the porch. He took his time, this lone policeman, looking all around at the old shade trees and following the bouncing run of squirrels collecting acorns and elm seeds from the ground. It was early autumn; crimson and russet leaves had fallen, and a warm

breeze caressed in and out among the trees, bringing a reminder of crab apples and dry leaves.

The officer approached, savoring the beauty of the place—there were few neighborhoods like this one—and as he drew closer I could see he had a thin, pointy face like a weasel.

“Are you Alma Simms?” he asked in a tenor voice.

“You just bet I’m Alma Simms,” I said. “I’ve been waiting a half hour for you and heaven knows what that thing in the kitchen’s doing now.”

He looked at me obliquely and came up to the porch. I could tell he appreciated the wooden steps because he walked up slowly, listening to the sound his boots made against the boards.

“Frenke’s the name, Ma’am.” He flashed his identification. “You called about something, ah, unusual in your stove?”

I nodded and ran ahead, irising the door for him to enter first.

He went through the living room, cavernous by today’s standards but not roomy because I had all my engraving equipment in there. We turned down the long corridor which gave onto various storage rooms, equipment closets, a toilet, and eventually dead-ended in the spacious kitchen with every modern convenience.

We stood there in the doorway between the kitchen and dining room and Officer Frenke surveyed the area with some attention. He

walked to the center of the room, eyeing the polished mahogany cabinets, the room maintenance unit, and then the disposer, meal receiver, refrigerator and stove. At last he came up to the oven door and looked in.

“You say the window moved like a mouth? How do you explain that? I don’t see any voice attachment.” He closed the door and banged on the window with a bunch of keys.

“I can’t explain it,” I said, perhaps a little angrily. But who could blame me under the circumstances? “We’ve only lived here a month and all of a sudden the refrigerator grows an arm and the stove starts talking.”

He looked up at me as if that explained everything. “The refrigerator grew an arm?”

I knew I shouldn’t have told him, but it slipped out. He might have believed about the stove, but the stove *and* the refrigerator, never.

“A human arm came out, but it hasn’t done that for about a week,” I said apologetically.

Officer Frenke stood up and looked at me in disgust. “Lady, are you pulling some kind of joke? If you think this is funny, you’re mistaken. You can be fined for this, you know.”

He really made me mad. I looked at his weasel face with utter hate; the drab green of his uniform against his dark face made him the epitome of ugliness.

"Now just a minute Officer, I know what I saw, and I'm not making any jokes about it. That oven spoke."

"What exactly did it say, Ma'am?" His eyes were sullen.

"It said I was cooking eggs at the wrong temperature. You can't imagine how I felt when . . ."

"And this little window opened and closed like a mouth?"

I nodded and he felt the juncture of glass to metal with his hands. I half hoped the oven would bite him, but that lousy machine just sat there pretending to be a regular stove. At last he stood up, tucking in his shirt a little.

"Ma'am, I can't find anything wrong with this stove. If you have any more problems with it, call a repairman."

He said all that with a half-hidden patronizing tone and I could tell he thought I was some kind of nut. He straightened his cap and headed down the hall, so there was nothing I could do but follow.

He said goodbye perfunctorily, thudded down the wooden steps and onto the path. I watched him as he went out to the craft, the sun throwing shadows through the trees onto his dull green uniform.

I sat on the porch for about an hour considering the various stupidities of the people with whom I had to deal and then I went back to the kitchen.

The stove sat in smug silence looking with its knobs out across

the room at the refrigerator. It was as if they were trying to force me out of my own house, and it made me furious. It was a dirty trick and I went over and gave the stove a swift kick in the window. That made me feel better for the split second before the window began to bend and flex.

"Ouch," shrieked the stove.

DURING the next week or so I didn't go near the kitchen, and I began to hate machines. Fenton complained that I never cooked anymore or even ordered meals or disposed the dishes. Fenton always was a louse about getting along with me.

"Alma, you have your business right here in the house—I don't see why you can't order something once in a while; and every night I clean up. You can't be serious about being afraid of the stove—can you?"

"Fenton, I think that stove is capable of holding a grudge. I kicked it and now it's just biding its time. Maybe a repairman can disconnect it; we can sell it."

Fenton gave me his don't-be-ridiculous look. He curled up in the molded chair—he always took the most comfortable place in the living room—and pretended to read his microfiche. I waited twenty minutes for him to give up pretending, and at last I spoke.

"I don't like this house, Fenton. I know we've only had it two months, but let's sell it. I could

get an ad in by Sunday."

Fenton threw down his flicviewer and scowled at me. I hadn't seen him that angry in a long time.

"It would be easier to sell off the appliances," he said, and I could see the effort he was making to speak patiently, "but after a while, we wouldn't have any left. We moved here because you nagged for automation and now you're letting your nerves get the better of you. I'm calling Doctor Saelman—he'll pull you out of this."

I stamped out of the room and went upstairs. Fenton was always complaining about me and giving me that holier-than-thou stuff about my being nervous or getting rushes of female hormone.

The bedroom was as large as the living room and spacious despite the bulk of a colossal air bed. I turned it on so the hover would work up to a nice height, took off my clothes, and lay with my head against the pillow.

Whenever I'm alone and it's very still—and it was very quiet except for the strange stealthy noises which seemed to hide in the house—I tend to get morbid and think about all the things that bother me about Fenton. I'll admit he may be a scapegoat for all the things that bother me, but only Fenton gets me angry on a regular basis.

I thought about how fat he was, how he picked on me, what a bastard he was about the house, and

most of all how he wouldn't believe me about the kitchen. He always was a bastard—was from the day we were married. He never had any aspirations except the ones I drove him to. Like the house.

FOR THE LAST ten years we'd lived in the near-prehistoric conditions of the Margate Highrise. It was one of those window-studded, red-brick monstrosities that jutted like an uneven tooth out of the landscape. We lived there when we first got married because we were poor and then we kept on living there so we could save money for "our house".

I complained constantly and Fenton finally gave in. "Fenton," I used to say in my most effective, high-pitched voice, "Fenton, I've had it with sweeping the floors, washing the walls, dusting, polishing and straightening. There are machines that can do that."

"But you like to cook," he said as if that compensated for everything.

"So I have a stove, and a refrigerator. Big deal—I take the garbage to the trashroom like any slum dweller and I can't even order groceries in that kitchen."

I knew when I had an advantage and I knew Fenton was weakening. If we got a loan we'd have the money, and I only had to stir Fenton into action.

"I'm tired of brushing my own teeth, fixing my own hair, clipping my own nails—they have

machines that . . ."

"All right!" Fenton yelled.

And so we bought the house: Excellent condition, elegant antique construction, 3 BR, 3 bath., 1 acre lot, fully automated, low down-payment—Armour T. Ventura & Co.

BY THE TIME I got to the bathroom, I was in a very bad temper; if Fenton had been there, I would have hit him. I turned on the lighting and stared into the mirror wall at myself. There I was—as a result of living in that house I was pale and haggard; my posture was that of an animal waiting to be pounced on, and I could detect definite wrinkles radiating from the corners of my eyes.

I stood up straight and smiled. It wouldn't do to turn into a hag because of the house. It could be sold, Fenton or no Fenton. I smoothed my dark hair back and bared my teeth to the mirror. Tomorrow I would get my hair done.

I reached beside the waterpic for the automatic toothbrush, but before I could get a grip, it turned itself on, jumped out of the holder, and began brushing my teeth.

I screamed—which is mighty difficult with a toothbrush scrubbing around in your mouth—and after a while, Fenton—that cretin—came in to check out the noise.

He picked the toothbrush off

the floor and, putting it back in its holder, scooped me up and put me in bed. He didn't even ask what happened, which was well enough because I was in no condition to tell him. I lay there with my eyes shut. I only opened them once to look at the clock, but when it winked at me, I shut them again quickly.

Fenton drove me to the hospital, but I wasn't really awake, so I can't recall how he got me dressed and got me in and out of our craft. I do recall that he almost dropped me as he leaned over the waist-high door and some envelopes fell from his pocket.

One large packet fell near my face. It was from Armour T. Ventura & Co., and the outside message stood out in bold red letters: *Contains Listing of Full and Latent Capabilities of your Fully-Automated Home.* Fenton put the envelope back in his pocket quickly, almost furtively.

NOW I'M SAFE from the house and that great weight lifted has filled me with elation and peace. I guess I'm here for observation on my nerves. It's hard to say because suddenly I can't listen—I have to concentrate. They put me in this soft, fluffy bed with little bars on the sides like a youthbed. It's very comfortable and I suppose the room is too. I haven't seen it because I've kept my eyes closed the whole time.

I know it's a white bed because all hospital beds are white. And I

(cont. on page 110)

When rumors first surfaced about a new television series created by Harlan Ellison, the science fiction community was excited; when *The Starlost* hit our screens, most of us were disappointed. In the following article, Ellison explains why. A somewhat different version of this article was published in the June, 1974, issue of *Genesis*, for which Harlan wrote the following blurb:

*Being a confidential and no-holds-barred history of how the most original concept for a television series in ten years was raped, looted & pillaged by everyone who could get hands in the till. Being the sustained and strident wail of pain from the creator of the NBC syndicated series *The Starlost*. Being an ugly view down the maw of the idiot tube. See the nice teeth? All the better to chew you with!*

SOMEHOW, I DON'T THINK WE'RE IN KANSAS, TOTO

by HARLAN ELLISON

SIX MONTHS of my life were spent in creating a dream the shape and sound and color of which had never been seen on television. The dream was called *The Starlost*, and between February and September of 1973 I watched it being steadily turned into a nightmare.

The late Charles Beaumont, a scenarist of unusual talents who wrote many of the most memorable *Twilight Zones*, said to me when I arrived in Hollywood in 1962, "Attaining success in Hollywood is like climbing a gigantic mountain of cow flop, in order to pluck one perfect rose from the summit. And you find when

you've made that hideous climb . . . you've lost the sense of smell."

In the hands of the inept, the untalented, the venal and the corrupt, *The Starlost* became a veritable Mt. Everest of cow flop and, though I climbed that mountain, somehow I never lost sight of the dream, never lost the sense of smell, and when it got so rank I could stand it no longer, I descended hand-over-hand from the northern massif, leaving behind \$93,000, the corrupters, and the eviscerated remains of my dream. I'll tell you about it.

February. Marty the agent called and said, "Go over to 20th

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and see Robert Kline."

"Who's Robert Kline?"

"West Coast head of taped syndicated shows. He's putting together a package of mini-series, eight or ten segments per show. He wants to do a science fiction thing. He asked for you. It'll be a co-op deal between 20th Century-Fox and the BBC. They'll shoot it in London."

London! "I'm on my way," I said, the jet-wash of my departure deafening him across the phone connection.

I met Kline in the New Administration Building of 20th, and his first words were so filled with sugar I had the feeling if I listened to him for very long I'd wind up with diabetes: "I wanted the top sf writer in the world," he said. Then he ran through an informed list of my honors in the field of science fiction. It was an impressive performance of the corporate art-form known as ego-massage.

Then Kline advised me that what he was after was, "A sort of *The Fugitive* in Space." Visions of doing a novel-for-television in the mode of *The Prisoner* splatted like overripe casaba melons; I got up and started to walk.

"Hold it, hold it!" Kline said. "What did *you* have in mind?" I sat down again.

Then I ran through half a dozen ideas for series' that would be considered primitive concepts in the literary world of sf. Kline found each of them too complex.

As a final toss at the assignment, I said, "Well, I've been toying with an idea for tape, rather than film; it could be done with enormous production values that would be financially impossible for a standard filmed series."

"What is it?" he said.

And here's what I told him:

Five hundred years from now, the Earth is about to suffer a cataclysm that will destroy all possibility for life on the planet. Time is short. The greatest minds and the greatest philanthropists get together and cause to have constructed in orbit between the Moon and the Earth, a giant ark, one thousand miles long, comprised of hundreds of self-contained biospheres. Into each of these little worlds is placed a segment of Earth's population, its culture intact. Then the ark is sent off toward the stars, even as the Earth is destroyed, to seed the new worlds surrounding those stars with the remnants of humanity.

But one hundred years after the flight has begun, a mysterious "accident" (which would remain a mystery till the final segment of the show, hopefully four years later) kills the entire crew, seals the biosphere-worlds so they have no contact with one another . . . and the long voyage goes on with the people trapped, developing their societies without any outside influence. Five hundred years go by, and the travelers—the Starlost—forget the Earth. To

them it is a myth, a vague legend, even as Atlantis is to us. They even forget they are adrift in space, forget they are in an interstellar vessel. Each community thinks it is "the world" and that the world is only fifty square miles, with a metal ceiling.

Until Devon, an outcast in a society rigidly patterned after the Amish communities of times past, discovers the secret, that they are onboard a space-going vessel. He learns the history of the Earth, learns of its destruction, and learns that when "the accident" happened, the astrogation gear of the ark was damaged and now the last seed of humankind is on a collision course with a star. Unless he can convince a sufficient number of biosphere worlds to band together in a communal attempt to learn how the ark works, repair it and re-program their flight, they will soon be incinerated in the furnace of that star toward which they're heading.

It was, in short, a fable of our world today.

"Fresh! Original! New!" Kline chirruped. "There's never been an idea like it before!" I didn't have the heart to tell him the idea was first propounded in astronomical literature in the early 1920's by the great Russian pioneer Tsiolkovsky, nor that the British physicist Bernal had done a book on the subject in 1929, nor that the idea had become *very* common coin in the genre of science fiction through stories by Heinlein, Har-

ison, Panshin, Simak and many others. (Arthur C. Clarke's current bestseller, *Rendezvous With Rama*, is the latest example of the basic idea.)

Kline suggested I dash home and write up the idea, which he would then merchandise. I pointed out to him that the Writers Guild frowns on speculative writing and that if he wanted the riches of my invention, he should lay on me what we call "holding money" to enable me to write a prospectus and to enable him to blue-sky it with the BBC.

The blood drained from his face at my suggestion of advance money, and he said he had to clear it with the BBC, but that if I wrote the prospectus he would guarantee me a free trip to London. I got up and started to walk.

"Hold it, hold it!" he said, and opened a desk drawer. He pulled out a cassette recorder and extended it. "Tell you what: why don't you just tell it on a cassette, the same way you told it to me." I stopped and looked. This was a new one on me. In almost fourteen years as a film and television writer, I'd seen some of the most circuitous, Machiavellian dodges ever conceived by the mind of Western Man to get writers to write on the cuff. But never this.

I thought on it for a moment, rationalized that this wasn't speculative writing, that at worst it was "speculative talking," and since a writer is expected to pitch an idea anyhow, it was just barely

legitimate.

So I took the cassette home, backed my spiel with the music from 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, outlined the barest bones of the series concept, and brought it back to Kline.

"Okay. Here it is," I said, "but you can't transcribe it. If you do, then it becomes spec writing and you have to pay me." I was assured he wouldn't put it on paper, and that he'd be back to me shortly. He was sure the BBC would go bananas for the idea.

No sooner was I out of his office then he had his secretary transcribe the seven-minute tape.

March. No word.

April. No word.

May. Suddenly there was a flurry of activity. Marty the agent called. "Kline sold the series. Go see him."

"Series?" I said, appalled. "But that idea was only viable for eight segments . . . a *series*, you say?"

"Go see him."

So I went. Kline greeted me as if I were the only human capable of deciphering the Mayan Codex, and caroled that he had sold the series not only to 48 of the NBC independent stations (what are called the O&O's, Owned & Operated stations), but that the Westinghouse outlets had bitten, and the entire Canadian Television Network, the CTV.

"Uh, excuse me," I said, in an act of temerity not usually attributed to writers in Hollywood, "how did you manage to sell this,

er, *series* without having a contract with me, or a prospectus, or a pilot script, or a pilot film . . . or *anything*?"

"They read your outline, and they bought it on the strength of your name."

"They *read* it? How?"

He circumnavigated that little transgression of his promise not to set my words on paper, and began talking in grandiose terms about how I'd be the story editor, how I'd have creative control, how I'd write many scripts for the show, and what a good time I'd have in Toronto.

"Toronto?!" I said, gawking. "What the hell happened to London? The Sir Lew Grade Studios. Soho. Buckingham Palace. Swinging London. What happened to all that?"

Mr. Kline, without bothering to inform the creator of this hot property he had been successfully hawking, had been turned down by the BBC and had managed to lay off the project with CTV, as an all-Canadian production of Glen Warren, a Toronto-based operation that was already undertaking to tape *The Starlost* at the CTFO Studios in Toronto. It was assumed by Mr. Kline that I would move to Toronto to story edit the series; he never bothered to ask if I *wanted* to move to Canada, he just assumed I would.

Mr. Kline was a real bear for assuming things.

Such as: I would write *his* series (which was the way he now

referred to it) even though a writers' strike was imminent. I advised him that if the strike hit, I would be incommunicado, but he waved away my warnings with the words, "Everything will work out." With such words, Napoleon went to Leipzig.

At that time I was a member of the Board of Directors of the Writers Guild of America, West and I was very pro-union, pro-strike, pro-getting long overdue contract inequities with the producers straightened out.

Just before the strike began, Kline called and said he was taking out advertisements for the series. He said he'd had artwork done for the presentations, and he needed some copy to accompany the drawings. I asked him how he could have artwork done when the spaceship had not yet been designed? (I was planning to create a vessel that would be absolutely feasible and scientifically correct, in conjunction with Ben Bova, editor of *Analog*.) Kline said there wasn't time for all that fooling-around, ads had to go out now!

It has always been one of the imponderables of the television industry to me, how the time is always *now*, when three days earlier no one had even *heard* of the idea.

But I gave him some words and, to my horror, saw the ad a week later: it showed a huge bullet-shaped *thing* I guess Kline thought was a spaceship, being

smacked by a meteorite, a great hole being torn in the skin of the bullet, revealing many levels of living space within . . . all of them drawn the wrong direction. I covered my eyes.

Let me pause for a moment to explain why this was a scientifically-illiterate, wholly incorrect piece of art, because it was merely the first indication of how little the producers of *The Starlost* understood what they were doing. Herewith, a Childs' Primer of Science Fiction:

There is no air in space. Space is very nearly a vacuum. That means an interstellar vessel, since it won't be landing anywhere, and doesn't need to be designed for passage through atmosphere, can be designed any way that best follows the function. The last time anyone used the bullet design for a starship was in *The Green Slime* (a film that oozes across the "Late Late Show" at times when normal people are sleeping.)

But it indicated the lack of understanding of sf by television executives. Look: if you turn on your set and see a pair of white swinging doors suddenly slammed open by a gurney pushed by two white-smocked attendants, you know that within moments Marcus Welby will be jamming a tube down somebody's trachea; if you see a dude in a black Stetson lying-out on a butte, aiming a Winchester, you know that within moments the Wells' Fargo stage is gonna be thundering down that

dusty trail; if Mannix walks into his inner office and there's a silky lady lounging in the chair across from his desk, you know that by the end of act one someone is going to try ventilating Joe's hide. It's all by rote, all programmed, all predictable . . . which is why *sf* seems to be having such a resurgence: it *isn't* predictable. Or at least it shouldn't be. A science fiction story has to have an interior logic, it has to be consistent, to get the viewer to go along with it. Rigorous standards of plotting *must* be employed to win that willing suspension of disbelief on the part of viewers that will get them to accept the fantastic premise. Break that logic, dumb it up, and the whole thing falls apart like Watergate alibis.

But the ad was only an early storm warning of what troubles were yet to befall me. The strike was called, and then began weeks of a kind of ghastly harassment I'd always thought was reserved for overblown melodramas about the Evils of Hollywood. Phone calls at all hours, demanding I write the "bible" for the series. (A "bible" is industry shorthand for the *précis* of what the show will do, who the characters are, what directions storylines should take. In short, the blueprint from which individual segments are written. Without a bible, only the creator knows what the series is about. Kline had no bible. He had nothing, at this point, but that seven-minute tape. With which

item, plus my name and the name of Doug Trumbull—who had done the special effects for *2001* and had directed *Silent Running*—who had been signed on as Executive Producer—he had sold this pipe dream to everyone in the Western World.)

But I wouldn't write the bible. I was on strike. Then began the threats. Followed by the intimidation, the bribes, the promises that they'd go forward with the idea without me, the veiled hints of scab writers who'd be hired to write their own version of the series . . . everything short of actually kidnapping me. Through these weeks—when even flights out of Los Angeles to secluded hideaways in the Michigan wilds and the northern California peninsula failed to deter the phone calls—I refused to write. It didn't matter that the series might not get on the air, it didn't matter that I'd lose a potload of money, the Guild was on strike in a noble cause and, besides, I didn't much trust Mr. Kline and the anonymous voices that spoke to me in the wee hours of the night. And, contrary to popular belief, many television writers are men and women of ethic: they can be rented, but they can't be bought.

I remember seeing a film of Clifford Odet's *The Big Knife* when I was a young writer living in New York and lusting after fame in Hollywood. I remember seeing the unscrupulous Steiger and his minions applying pressure

to a cracking Palance, to get him to sign a contract, and I remember smiling at the danger-filled melodramatics. During that period of pre-production on "The Starlost," I ceased smiling.

The threats ranged from breaking my typing fingers to insuring I'd never work in the Industry again. The bribes ranged from \$13,000 to be placed in an unnumbered Swiss bank account to this:

One afternoon before the strike, I'd been in Kline's office. I'd been leafing through the *Players' Directory*, the trade publications that list all actors and actresses, with photos. I'd commented idly that I found the person of one pictured young starlet quite appealing. Actually, what I'd said was that I'd sell my soul to get it on with her.

Now, weeks later, during my holdout and Kline's attempts to get me to scab, I was pottering about my house, when the doorbell rang. I went to the door, opened it, and there stood the girl of my wanton daydreams. Bathed in sunlight, a palpable nimbus haloing that gorgeous face. I stood openmouthed, unable to even invite her in.

"I was in the neighborhood," she said, entering the house with no assistance from me, "and I've heard so much about you, I decided to just come and say hello."

She said hello. I said something unintelligible. (I have the same reaction when standing in front of

Picasso's *Guernica*. Otherworldly beauty has a way of turning my brains to prune-whip yogurt.) But it took only a few minutes of conversation to ascertain that yes, she knew Mr. Kline and, yes, she knew about the series, and . . .

I wish I could tell you I used her brutally and sent her back to where I assumed she had come from, but feminism has taken its toll and I merely asked her to split.

She split.

I couldn't watch any TV that night. My eyes were too swollen from crying.

And the cajoling went on. Kline, of course, knew *nothing* about the girl, had never had anything to do with sending her over, would be affronted if anyone even *suggested* he had tried such a loathesome, demeaning trick. Hell, I'd be the *last* one to suggest it. Or maybe second from the last.

But howzabout the scab writer threat? Well . . .

At one point, representatives of Mr. Kline *did* bring in a scab. A non-union writer to whom they imparted a series of outright lies so he'd believe he was saving my bacon. When they approached well-known sf writer Robert Silverberg to write the bible, Bob asked them point-blank, "Why isn't Harlan writing it?" They fufmuh'ed and said, well, er, uh, he's on strike. Bob said, "Would he want me to write this?" They knew he'd call me, and they told

him no, I'd be angry. So he passed up some thousands of dollars, and they went elsewhere. And this being the kind of world it is, they found a taker.

I found out about the end-run, located the writer in a West LA hotel where they'd secreted him, writing madly through a weekend, and I convinced him he shouldn't turn in the scab bible. To put the period to the final argument that Kline & Co. were not being honest, I called Kline from that hotel room while the other writer listened in on the bathroom extension phone. I asked Kline point-blank if other writers had been brought in to scab. He said no; he assured me they were helplessly waiting out the strike till I could bring the purity of my original vision to the project. I thanked him, hung up, and looked at the other writer who had just spent 72 hours beating his brains out writing a scab bible. "I rest my case."

"Let's go to the Writers Guild," he said.

It drove Kline bananas. Every-whichway he turned, I was there, confounding his shabby attempts at circumventing an honest strike.

I'll skip a little now. The details were ugly, but grow tedious in the re-telling. It went on at hideous length, for weeks. Finally, Glen Warren in Toronto, at Kline's urging, managed to get the Canadian writers guild, ACTRA, to accept that *The Starlost* was a wholly Canadian-produced series. They agreed that was the

case, after much pressure was applied in ways I'm not legally permitted to explicate, and I was finally convinced I should go to work.

That was my next mistake.

They had been circulating copies of the scab bible with all of its erroneous material, and had even given names to the characters. When I finally produced the authentic bible, for which they'd been slaving so long, it confused everyone. They'd already begun building sets and fashioning material that had nothing to do with the show.

I was brought up to Toronto, to work with writers, and because the producing entity would get government subsidies if the show was clearly acceptable in terms of "Canadian content" (meaning the vast majority of writers, actors, directors and production staff had to be Canadian), I was ordered to assign script duties to Canadian TV writers.

I sat in the Four Seasons Motel in Toronto in company with a man named Bill Davidson, who had been hired as the Producer even though he knew nothing about science fiction and seemed thoroughly confused by the bible, and we interviewed dozens of writers from 9 am till 7 p.m.

It is my feeling that one of the prime reasons for the artistic (and, it would seem, ratings) failure of *The Starlost* was the quality of the scripts. But it isn't as simple a matter as saying the Canadians

aren't good writers, which is the cop-out Glen Warren and Kline used. Quite the opposite is true. The Canadian writers I met were bright, talented, and anxious as hell to write good shows.

Unfortunately, because of the nature of Canadian TV, which is vastly different from American TV, they had virtually no experience writing episodic drama as we know it. ("Train them," Kline told me. "Train a cadre of writers?" I said, stunned. "Sure," said Kline, who knew nothing about writing, "it isn't hard." No, not if I wanted to make it my life's work.) And, for some peculiar reason, with only two exceptions I can think of, there are no Canadian sf writers.

But they were willing to work their hearts out to do good scripts. Sadly, they didn't have the kind of freaky minds it takes to plot sf stories with originality and logic. There were the usual number of talking plant stories, giant ant stories, space pirate stories, westerns transplanted to alien environments, the Adam-&-Eve story, the after-the-Bomb story . . . the usual cliches people who haven't been trained to think in fantasy terms conceive of as fresh and new.

Somehow, between Ben Bova and myself—Ben having been hired after I made it abundantly clear that I needed a specialist to work out the science properly—we came up with ten script ideas, and assigned them. We knew there would be massive re-write problems, but I was willing

to work with the writers, because they were energetic and anxious to learn. Unfortunately, such was not the case with Davidson and the moneymen from 20th, NBC, Glen Warren and the CTV, who were revamping and altering arrangements daily, in a sensational imitation of The Mad Caucus Race from *Alice in Wonderland*.

I told the Powers in charge that I would need a good assistant story editor who could do re-writes, because I was not about to spend the rest of my natural life in a motel in Toronto, rewriting other people's words. They began to scream. One gentleman came up to the room and banged his fist on the desk while I was packing to split, having received word a few hours earlier that my Mother was dying in Florida. He *told* me I was going to stay there in that room till the first drafts of the ten scripts came in. He *told* me that I was going to write the pilot script in that room and not leave till it was finished. He *told* me I could go home but would be back on such-and-such a date. He *told* me that was my schedule.

I *told* him if he didn't get the hell out of my room I was going to clean his clock for him.

Then he went away, still screaming; Ben Bova returned to New York; I went to see my Mother, established that she was somehow going to pull through, returned to Los Angeles; and sat down to finish writing the pilot script.

This was June already. Or was

it July. Things blur. In any case, it was only weeks away from air-date debut, and they didn't even have all the principals cast. Not to mention the special effects Trumbull had promised, which weren't working out; the production staff under the confused direction of Davidson was doing a dandy impression of a Balinese Fire & Boat Drill; Kline was still madly dashing about selling something that didn't exist to people who apparently didn't care what they were buying . . . and I was banging my brains out writing "Phoenix Without Ashes," the opening segment that was to limn the direction of the single most expensive production ever attempted in Canada.

I was also brought up on charges by the writers Guild for writing during the strike.

I called Marty the agent and threatened him with disembowelment if he ever again called me to say, "Go see Bob Kline." In my personal lexicon, the word "kline" could be found along with "eichmann," "dog catcher" and "rerun."

But I kept writing. I finished the script and got it off to Canada with only one interruption of note:

The name Norman Klenman had been tossed at me frequently in Toronto by the CTV representative and Davidson and, of course, by Kline and his minions. Klenman, I was told, was the answer to my script problems. He was a Canadian writer who had fled to the States for the larger money,

and since he was actually a Canadian citizen who was familiar with writing American series TV, he would be acceptable to the TV board in Ottawa under the terms of "Canadian content" and yet would be a top-notch potential for scripts that need not be heavily rewritten. I was too dazed in Toronto to think about Klenman.

But as I sat there in Los Angeles writing my script, I received a call from Mr. Klenman, who was at that moment in Vancouver. "Mr. Ellison," he said, politely enough, "this is Norman Klenman. Bill Davidson wanted me to call you about *The Starlost*. I've read your bible and, frankly, I find it very difficult and confusing . . . I don't understand science fiction . . . but if you want to train me, and pay me the top-of-the-show money the Guild just struck for, I'll be glad to take a crack at a script for you." I thanked him and said I'd get back to him when I'd saved my protagonist from peril at the end of act four.

When I walked off the show, the man they hired not only as story editor to replace me, but to rewrite *my* script, as well, was Norman Klenman who "don't understand science fiction."

My walkout on my brain child, and all that pretty fame and prettier money was well in the wind by the time of Klenman's call, but I was still intending to write the scripts I'd contracted for, when the following incidents happened, and I knew it was all destined for

the ashcan.

I was in Dallas. Guest of honor at a convention where I was trying to summon up the gall to say *The Starlost* would be a dynamite series. I was paged in the lobby. Phone call from Toronto. It was Bill Davidson. The conversation describes better than ten thousand more words what was wrong with the series:

"Major problems, Harlan," Davidson said. Panic lived in his voice.

"Okay, tell me what's the matter," I said.

"We can't shoot a 50-mile-in-diameter biosphere on the ship."

"Why?"

"Because it looks all fuzzy on the horizon."

"Look out the window, Bill. Everything is fuzzy on the horizon."

"Yeah, but on TV it all gets muddy in the background. We're going to have to make it a 6-mile biosphere."

"Whaaaat?!"

"Six miles is the best we can do."

There is a pivotal element in the pilot script where the hero manages to hide out from a lynch mob. In a fifty mile biosphere that was possible. In a six mile biosphere all they have to do was link arms and walk across it. "But, Bill, that means I'll have to re-write the entire script."

"Well, that's the best we can do."

Then, in a blinding moment of

satori, I realized, Davidson was wrong, dead wrong, his thinking was so limited he was willing to scrap the logic of the script rather than think it through. "Bill," I said, "who can tell the difference on a TV screen, whether the horizon is six miles away or fifty? And since we're showing them an enclosed world that's never existed before, why *shouldn't* it look like that! Shoot *de facto* six miles and call it fifty; it doesn't make any damned difference!"

There was a pause, then, "I never thought of that."

Only one indication of the unimaginative, hidebound and obstinately arrogant thinking that emerged from total unfamiliarity with the subject, proceeded through mistake after mistake, and foundered on the rocks of inability to admit confusion.

The conversation went on with Davidson telling me that even if Trumbull's effects didn't work and they couldn't shoot a fifty mile biosphere—after he'd just admitted that it didn't matter *what* distance they said they were showing—I'd simply *love* the set they were building of the control room.

"You're building the *control* room?" I said, aghast with confusion and disbelief. "But you won't need that till the last segment of the series. Why are you building it now?"

(It should be noted that one of the Maltese Falcons of the series, one of the prime mysteries, is the location of the control room bio-

sphere. When they find it, they can put the ark back on course. If they find it in the first segment, it automatically becomes the shortest TV series in history.)

"Because you had it in your bible," he explained.

"That was intended to show how the series *ended*, for God's sake!" I admit I was screaming at that point. "If they find it first time out, we can all pack our bags and play an hour of recorded organ music!"

"No, no," Davidson argued, "they still have to find the backup computer, don't they?"

"Aaaaarghh," I aaaaarghhed. "Do you have even the faintest scintilla of an idea what a backup control *is*?"

"Uh, I'm not certain. Isn't it the computer at the back of the ship?"

"It's a fail-safe system, you drooling imbecile; it's what they use if the primary fails. The primary is the control . . . oh to hell with it!" I hung up.

When I returned to Los Angeles, I found matters had degenerated even further. They were shooting a six mile biosphere and *calling* it six miles. They said no one would notice the discrepancy in the plot. They were building the control room, with that arrogant ignorance that could not be argued with. Ben Bova, who was the technical advisor, had warned them they were going about it in the wrong way, they nodded their heads . . . and ignored him.

Then Klenman rewrote me. Oh boy.

As an indication of the level of mediocrity they were seeking, "Phoenix Without Ashes" had been retitled, in one of the great artistic strokes of all time, "Voyage of Discovery." I sent them word they would have to take my name off the show as creator and as writer of that segment. But they would have to use my pseudonym, to protect my royalties and residuals. (They had screwed up my creation, but I'd be damned if I'd let them profit from the rape.)

Davidson reluctantly agreed. He knew the Writers Guild contract guaranteed me that one last weapon. "What's your pen-name, we'll use it, what is it?"

"Cordwainer Bird," I said. "That's b-i-r-d, as in 'for the birds.'"

Now *he* was screaming. He swore they'd fight me, they'd never use it, I was denying them the use of my name that was so valuable with science fiction fans. Never! Never!

God bless the Writers Guild.

If you tuned in the show before it vanished from all earthly ken you saw a solo credit card that said

CREATED BY CORDWAINER
BIRD

and that's your humble servant saying the Visigoths won again.

Bova walked off the series the week after Trumbull left, because of scientific illiteracies he'd warned them against, such as

"radiation virus" (which is an impossibility . . . radiation is a matter of atoms, viruses are biological entities, even as you and I and Kline and Davidson, I presume), "space senility" (which, I guess means old, feeble, blathering vacuum), and "solar star" (which is a terrific illiterate redundancy like saying "I live in a big house home").

The Starlost came up a loser, as do most TV series. Because they don't understand the materials with which they have to work, because they are so tunnel-visioned into thinking every dramatic series can be transliterated from the prosaic and over-familiar materials of cop, doctor and cowboy shows, because there was so much money to be skimmed . . . another attempt at putting something fresh and innovative on the little screen with intelligence came up a loser.

The upshot of all the foregoing was precisely what I had predicted when I cut out of that deranged scene. NBC had gone into the series with a guarantee of sixteen episodes firm, and an almost guaranteed pickup option for eight more. But the ratings were so low, in virtually every city where the series was aired—sometimes running opposite the nine thousandth rerun of *I Love Lucy* or scintillating segments of *Zen Archery for the Millions*—that NBC bailed out after the first sixteen.

The shows were so disgracefully inept, so badly acted, uniformly

directed with the plunging break-neck pace of a quadruple amputee crossing a busy intersection, based in confusion and plotted on the level of a McGuffey's primer . . . that when the show was canceled after sixteen weeks, there were viewers who never knew it was missing.

When it was dumped, and I got the word from a contact at the network, I called one of Kline's toadies, and caroled my delight. "What the hell are *you* so damned happy about," he said, "you just lost a total of \$93,000 in participation profits."

"It's *worth* ninety-three thousand bucks to see you fuckers go down the toilet," I said.

But even though I fell down that rabbit-hole in TV Land and found, like Dorothy, that it wasn't Kansas, or any other place that resembled the real world, I have had several moments of bright and lovely retribution cum vindication.

At one point, when the roof started falling in on them, they called Gene Roddenberry, the successful creator of *Star Trek*, and they offered him fifty per cent of the show if he'd come up and produce the show out of trouble for them. Gene laughed at them and said what did he need fifty per cent of a loser for, he had 100% of two winners of his own. They said they could understand that, but did he have someone else in mind whom he could remember as producer? Gene said, sure he did.

They made the mistake of asking him who.

He said, "Harlan Ellison. If you hadn't fucked him over so badly, he could have done a good job for you."

Then *he* hung up on them.

Which is just what the viewers did.

The second bright moment was when the trial board of the Writers Guild found me not guilty of scabbing. It was an unanimous decision of the trial judges, and I was reinstated on the Writers Guild Board of Directors shortly thereafter.

But the brightest moment of all is this very moment I'm writing these words. Because today the Writers Guild announced the final nominees for "Best Written Television Scripts" for the year 1973.

In the category of "dramatic-episodic," meaning continuing series', as opposed to anthologies or comedies, there are eight nominees out of hundreds of scripts submitted. Four *Waltons*, a *Gunsmoke*, a *Marcus Welby*, a *Streets of San Francisco* and . . .

Humility forces me to bare my fangs, dripping with the blood of revenge, and howl at the moon! My *original* script of "Phoenix Without Ashes," not the emasculated and insipid drivel that was aired, but the script as I wrote it, before the idiots fucked it over . . . *that* script has been nominated for the highest writers award Hollywood can give.

And even if it doesn't win, I

know damned well that the loss of \$93,000 was not the vain and foolish gesture of a nit-picker. That nomination is the rose I've plucked from the top of the mountain of cow flop *The Starlost* became.

And y'know what? I can smell it. Any y'know what else? It smells sweet, baby, sweeter than all the perfumes of Araby. Or even Kansas!

—HARLAN ELLISON

THE STARLOST UPDATE

On 21 March 1974, Harlan Ellison became the first person in the 26-year history of the Writers Guild of America Awards for Most Outstanding Film/TV Screenplays to win the honor *three* times. Against 400 top submissions of *original version* of the pilot script for "The Starlost," *Phoenix Without Ashes*, was awarded the highest honor bestowed by the craft guild in Hollywood. It should be noted that the WGA Awards are given *solely* on the basis of written material, with the names of the authors removed, judged by a blue ribbon panel whose identities are kept secret. The winning script was Ellison's versions; *not* the rewritten script that was shot and aired against the creator's wishes. When Ellison accepted the Award at the 26th Annual Awards Reception in Hollywood, he said, in part, "If the fuckers want to rewrite you . . . hit 'em!"

**SUSAN
WOOD**

**the
Clubhouse**



Editorial note: As will have been noted by regular readers of this magazine, The Clubhouse has occasionally appeared irregularly, skipping an issue from time to time. This has not been Susan Wood's fault, but rather the result of my sometimes scheduling more material for an issue than would easily fit. Last issue was one such issue—but we did manage to squeeze most of the column in. What was unfortunate was the fact that one review and the Other Fanzines listing had to be cut—from what was an integrated column on Australian fandom. For that reason I am prefacing Susan's present column with the material cut from the last Clubhouse. The new column will follow directly after that.—TW

SCYTHROP 26,27,28 (irregular, mimeo—I think; now defunct; Autumn, 1972; Spring, 1972; Summer, 1973/74)

PHILOSOPHICAL GAS 26,27 (quarterly, mimeo; 26 and 34 pp. of very small type, A\$2/yr., no trades. All the above from John Bangsund, GPO Box 357, Kingston ACT 2604, Australia.)

I could devote a whole column to the Legendary Bangsund: witty, strange, urbane, impossible, fascinating. His writing is superb; I could quote for pages. His writing is

thoughtful, thought-provoking; I could argue with him for hours. His fanzines are physically beautiful, witty, entertaining; *Scythrop* 26, a parody of *SFC*, is a gem. But what can I possibly say about a fan of Bangsund's stature, about a man who's merrily typing away on *Philosophical Gas* 27, answering a loc from John Berry, when he suddenly breaks off:

"24th March: I haven't sat at this machine since Friday night, when I typed the above. I forget what I had been doing during the day, but somehow I had managed to drink two bottles of Rhinecastle 26A by the time Sally came home from work, so I was pretty far gone and she didn't like it. We had a bit of a fight about this—you know, the family that fights together stays together—and somehow in the middle of all this we decided to get married. Well, it seemed a good idea at the time, and yesterday it still seemed a good idea, and today it still seems a good idea, so we'll probably do something about it this week."

Some phenomena must be experienced personally. John Bangsund is one. He's one of my five favourite fanwriters. I urge you to discover whether you share my opinion.

Australian fandom: I thought you'd like to meet a few of the people. I'd

say that, from their fanzines, Aussiefen are characterized by a sort of reverent irreverence. It's evident, to take two different examples, in Leigh Edmonds' "Hell," an impressive article on religion, light but neither flip nor in bad taste, in *Philosophical Gas* 26; and John Alderson's "It's Alright But" on qualifications in Australian speech patterns, in *Gegenschein* 13. Australian fen have a sense of proportion; they can treat a topic with the seriousness it does or doesn't deserve, without blowing trivia out of proportion. Friendliness, not a paper feud, results. What I like most about Australian fandom is that it's a fine hobby some interesting people want to share with us, but not a way of life that obsesses them.

AUSSIECON '75, the 33rd World Science Fiction Convention, will be held in Melbourne, Aug. 14-17, 1975. Membership is us\$10 attending, us\$3 supporting, from Aussiecon, GPO Box 4039, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, Australia; or from these agents:

Jack Chalker, 5111 Liberty Hts., Baltimore, MD 21207

John Millard, P.O. Box 4, Station K, Toronto 12, Ont., Canada

Fred Patten, Apt. 1, 11863 W. Jefferson, Culver City, CA 90230

Other Australian Fanzines:

MITHRIL and OSIRIS (Del and Dennis Stocks, P.O. Box 235, Albion, Brisbane, Queensland 4010; general.)

SOMETHING ELSE (Shayne McCormack, 49 Orchard Rd., Bass Hill, NSW 2197; personalzine.)

CHAO (John Alderson, P.O. Box 72, Maryborough, Vic. 3465; general; also SENNACHIE, about history.)

SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY (Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic. 3001; A60¢, US\$1; issue 40 now on stencil. Serious genzine; recommended.)

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: AN AUSTRALIAN TRIBUTE (ed. John Bangsund; available from him or Space Age Books, 305 Swanston St., Melbourne, Vic. 3001. 100pp., A\$2.)

and: LESLEIGH'S ADVENTURES DOWN UNDER (Lesleigh Luttrell's 1972 DUFF trip report, proceeds to the Down Under Fan Fund; from her at 525 W. Main, Madison, WI 53703; mimeo, 35 pp., \$1.)

ONCE EVERY TWO MONTHS, I sit down with a blotchy ballpoint, a package of yellow newsprint (for rough-drafting) and the contents of a large carton labelled "The Clubhouse." I re-read an assortment of letters and fanzines: words and drawings, the product of hundreds of fans' lives, time and money, all trying to share their ideas and fantasies, win response and egoboo. Chewing the ballpoint, I ponder profound questions. If I start drinking bourbon, will I learn to write as well as Bob Tucker? How can this person expect me to take his/her words seriously when he/she hasn't cared enough to make them legible? And how did all these fanzines get here, anyway?

One of the letters in the current pile asks that last question too. Edward F. Frank, R.D. #1, Reynoldsville, PA 15851, writes:

"I will be attending the University of Pittsburgh this fall. While I am there I *will* publish a sf fanzine. Now to my problem, I don't know how to get started. I want a good fanzine, I have planned what I want to include in it, but I need articles, letters, helpful suggestions, by fans, writers, fanzines, to give an aura of legitimacy to my first issue. I want to know how other fanzines got started, difficulties that I might not have foreseen, etc. So I am writing letters asking for

help. Perhaps you may be able to."

Well, Edward, and everyone else who's wondering how to start a fanzine: I'm sorry. I can't write the articles you need—I simply haven't free time, right now, to indulge my compulsion to transform every experience into paragraphs. I can't provide artwork, either—but then, I can't sing, or play invisible electric guitar. One learns to live with inadequacies.

More generally, I can't provide what you seem to be seeking: some magic formula for instant fanzine success. Try contacting your local club for companionship, advice, and people to badger for contributions. Otherwise, read fanzines and learn by experience, like the rest of us.

Fanzines are born, as far as I can tell, for the same mysterious, misunderstood, selfish, subconscious reasons children are born. Ideally, you want to communicate and create, to reach out, touch, share your life with others. Or you want the egoboo of successful parenthood. Everyone else is doing it. It happens by accident. Fanzines, like children, can be fun, or an expensive responsibility completely dominating your life. (I stand in awe of fans like David and Beth Gorman, parents of the excellent genzine *Gorbett* and of young twins!) In their favour, fanzines don't cry, and can be abandoned if you grow tired of them.

That's enough of that analogy. The point is, becoming a faned is a personal experience, involving individual responses to common problems: finding material, duplicating it, getting response.

Luckily, fandom now has its Benjamin Spock.

OUTWORLDS #20 (Bill Bowers, P.O. Box 148, Wadsworth, OH 44281;

quarterly, offset; 36 pp. of *small* type, \$1. Second quarter, 1974)

Issue #20 of *Outworlds*, one of this year's Hugo-nominated fanzines, contains a bonus: GRAFANEDICA, "a fanzine about fanzines" which "aims to offer advice, sources, help—to those who are interested in publishing their first fanzine, or those interested in improving their current fanzine."

EDICA begins with "Living in a Fanzine: the Art of James Shull" by Barry Gillam—an article as important for what it represents as for what it says. Bill writes: "Sometimes, after the first dozen or so years, you begin to wonder WHY you're publishing a fanzine. Surely there must be easier ways to spend your time. . .

"Then you get something like this in the mail—completely unexpected and unsolicited—and you KNOW why you're still hanging around! There's no way you could ask someone to write something like this; it has to come from the heart and the deep interest of the author. I dig it."

So do I, as a reader, editor, and admirer/publisher of Shull's work. I have never really enjoyed art criticism; so much seems to be hype, or artists' shop-talk. Gillam avoids both as he analyses the weaknesses and strengths of Shull's art, its content and approach. In particular, he examines Shull's awareness of the fanzine as medium and topic, especially the jokes his furry creatures make about "living in a fanzine."

All very fine, you say, but how does my hypothetical neozine become *Outworlds*, with fine art and fine words? Work, patience and more work, reply Bill Bowers, Larry McCombs and Dave Locke, in a three-part primer for faneds.

In "The Making of a Fanzine," re-

printed from *OW* #17, Bill Bowers talks about the human factors involved in publishing: choosing an approach to material and its presentation, asking for contributions, presenting them. He talks about behaving like an editor, with an awareness of yourself and others: "Assuming. . . that you are essentially on your own, your most valuable resource must be you. Your fanzine will, as well it should, reflect your interests—or you will soon grow bored with it and drop the whole thing. The worst mistake a beginning fanned can make is to print something he really doesn't care for, simply because it is a) expected of him, or b) because this is how Fanzine X became famous."

The core of the article is a list of "basic DO's and DON'T," not rules, but recognition of the courtesy the fanned owns readers and contributors:

"1) DON'T be afraid to ask for material. The worst anyone can do is to say No!

"2) DO acknowledge contributions promptly, and return promptly those you have no intention of using.

"3) Other than correcting spelling errors, DON'T 'edit' the material without the permission of the writer. At the rates you are paying [usually, a contributor's copy] this is only fair.

"4) DON'T print something *only* because it is a) the thing to do, or b) sure to be controversial.

"5) DON'T forget to send a copy to the contributors . . . and to people mentioned or reviewed, when possible.

"6) DO . . . treat all of your contributors as you would wish to be treated if your positions were reversed. (In fandom, they may well be, some day!)"

Like Bowers, Larry McCombs in "Editor: One Who Edits" discusses

printing, and other technical matters such as setting up mailing records. McCombs article is reprinted from the early 60's, from Art Hayes' *Through the Haze*, and some advice is outdated; few fan handstencil artwork now, many use offset printing instead of mimeo. The article itself is relevant, though, since McCombs' basic concern is, again, with editorial behaviour. When he discusses staples, typos, and the placing of editorial comments in the lettercol, his concern is with the readers' enjoyment.

Both editors/advisors stress that editing is a skill, acquired by studying other fanzines and fandom in general, and by practice. "Remember: It often takes three or four consecutive outstanding issues to begin gaining a good reputation—but one sloppy job can undo all the good work," warns McCombs.

And Bowers, the Grand Old Man, publishing since 1961, writes: "The standard advice is not to start your own fanzine until you've been active in fandom for a certain period of time—say, six months minimum—and have seen several fanzines, written letters of comment to some, and perhaps even contributed material to a few . . . of course I didn't follow this advice, and many don't. The type of person who becomes a fan is not predisposed towards being patient in such matters.

"It helps your cause if you've talented friends, relatives, classmates . . . 'lean' on them! It's unlikely, though not impossible, that you'll get any Big Name Fans, or 'goshwow!', Pros, to contribute to your first issue. You'd be better advised to publish several small, and fairly frequent issues containing the best material you can gather, than to attempt producing the ultimate fanzine the first time out.

More fanzines—perhaps 70/80%—die the death between first and second issues than at any other one period, and fans are generally a bit sceptical about contributing when they receive a first issue from a relative unknown. As in any other endeavour, you have to pay your dues, establish your credentials and reliability.”

Still interested? Dave Locke’s “Apples and Oranges and Editorials” repeats the same theme: know what you want to do with your fanzine, and practice to do it well. As he points out, the editorial, too often a last-minute “hodgepodge of random natterings,” actually establishes the personality and quality of your zine. His suggestions, while inevitably composition-textish, are useful.

Three articles won’t teach anyone how to edit the Perfect Fanzine, because there isn’t one. Bill Bowers, for all his concern with layout, all his study and expertise, “loses” the beginning of a Bill Wolfenbarger article in a column of advertising—a confusing, irritating misjudgment. His own editorials tend to concentrate on “whither OW”; and while I enjoy the debate, many readers wish he’d simply get on with the job. More important, his soulsearchings over the fanzine’s future reveal the most serious problem of involvement with fandom, and fanpublishing. It can become “a way of life,” cutting you off from, or providing an escape from, the human world. Bill in his editorial admits that: “I can ‘talk’ with my typewriter with greater freedom (and certainly be more articulate) than I can with my vocal cords.” Fine, but what happens when your fanzine is the most important element of your life, when you say: “I aim to put everything I’ve got, emotionally and financially, into it”?

On this side of obsession, there is

no Perfect Fanzine. There is, however, the best fanzine you can produce. The articles in *OW* #20, the constantly-evolving format of the zine itself, point us all to that ideal.

To answer other letters: some of you wonder why I write consistently positive reviews. Generally, I simply don’t finish fanzines I don’t enjoy, or physically can’t read. Also, I’ve been writing ‘theme’ columns, pointing out what you-the-reader might enjoy in certain types of fanzines. Most important, I don’t see any point in mindless feuding, or in flaying some hapless neo’s smudgy ditto creation, full of crude art and worse fanfic, distinguished only by its misuse of the English language, merely to satisfy my readers’ bloodlust. I dislike *The Alien Critic* in direct proportion to its slavering delight in controversy-for-controversy’s-sake, without real regard for the issues in question.

And why don’t I review more fanzines? Partly for the same reason I tend to discuss, not dissect. I see *The Clubhouse* as a column about fandom, as reflected in fanzines and what they do, rather than a buyer’s guide or checklist of specific titles. You start to pub your ish in July; you mail it in August; it arrives in mid-September; I review it in late October, *AMAZING* prints the column in May. By that time, you’ve gafiated, or at least run out of that issue. But, well, alright; here’s a partial survey of the contents of my “Clubhouse” box.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #10 (Richard E. Geis, P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211; quarterly, mimeo; 56 pp. microelite, 4/\$4 US, higher foreign rates. Aug. 1974)

This year, Dick Geis shared his third Hugo for “Best Fanzine” with

Andy Porter's *Algol*. He plans a print run of 3,000 copies (mimeod, collated, etc. entirely by Geis—madness!) and expects enough subscriptions to continue making a small profit. (Hence he says he "probably won't be eligible" for the 1974 Hugos, as faned or fanwriter, though that's for the Aussiecon committee to decide.) The point is, *TAC* obviously appeals to fans.

Controversy aside, Geis attracts the serious sf reader with material by and about the professional writers: in this issue, Robert Bloch's *GoH* speech from *Torcon 2*, and a long interview with Stanislaw Lem. Columns, letters, ads and natterings, triple-column, flow into each other (confusing!), tied together by Geis' opinionated, eminently readable reviews. Plus: "The Alien's Archives," a useful checklist of books received and magazine contents. [Geis now says he's returning to photo-offset and his former Hugo-winning title *Science Fiction Review*—TW]

DISTAFF #1 (Janet Small, 94 Avenue Rd., Toronto, Ont. M5R 2H2, Canada; oneshot, mimeo; 28 pp., 50¢ Summer, 1974) A fanzine about women in sf, from the women of the Ontario SF Club. The major article, "Females in the Future" by Victoria Vayne, presents a useful survey of women's roles in sf. Unfortunately while aware of the difference between our society and a created world, it blurs the distinction between author and creations, specifically in repeating a major misconception about *Left Hand of Darkness*. The Gethenians are referred to by the masculine pronoun not because LeGuin didn't try to invent a neuter (see *Science Fiction Commentary* #26) but because the novel is presented as a "translation"

into English, with all its limitations; and because the main narrator is not LeGuin, but Genly Ai, who cannot deal with Gethenians as he/she beings.

DON-O-SAUR #36 (Don C. Thompson, 7498 Canosa Ct., Westminster, CO 80030; monthly, offset; 20 pp., 25¢. Sept. 1974) Generally interesting personalzine; this issue, a *Discon* report.

THE EILDON TREE #1 (Donald G. Keller for The Fantasy Association, P.O. Box 24560, Los Angeles, CA 90024; quarterly, offset; 28 pp., 4/\$3.50. Fall, 1974) This new journal focuses on the serious discussion of fantasy, especially such adult fantasy masters as William Morris (discussed by Donald Keller) and Lord Dunsany (by Darrell Schweitzer). There are long, valuable reviews of books and fan material, and an entertaining account by Joe Christopher of Tennyson's deservedly-forgotten play about Robin Hood ("It might do well as a summer tv special."). Paula Marmor and Judith Weiss provide attractive art and headings. I'm impressed by the intelligence displayed, although the articles tend to waver uneasily between informal appreciation and formal scholarship; and E.E. Farley's attempt to imitate Cabell's mannered style, lacking the wit and grace of the original, obscures the serious content.

KALLIKANZAROS #8 (John Ayotte, 3555 Norwood Ave., Columbus, OH 43224; irregular, mimeo; 50 pp., the usual or \$1. Aug. 1974) Genzine; attractive layout highlights a summary of seminars on "Life Style 2000," Don D'Amassa on H.H. Hollis, and an excellent essay on *Inhabited Island*, a

Russian sf novel, by Patrick McGuire.

KOSMIC CITY KAPERS #4 (Jeff May, Box 68, Liberty, MO 64068; irregular, mimeo; 18 pp., 25¢. Aug. 1974) Genzine, featuring the always-funny Jodie Offutt, and Eric Lindsay on Sydney meat pies.

MYTHOLOGIES #1 (Don D'Amassa, 19 Angell Dr., E. Providence, RI 02914; irregular, ditto; 14 pp., loc or 2 10¢ stamps. Oct. 1974.) Excellent, thoughtful personalzine; Don writes well, whether about prejudice or flat tires.

NOTES FROM THE CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT #8 (Denis Quane, Box CC, E. Texas Sta., Commerce, TX 75428; monthly, mimeo; 24 pp., the usual or 30¢. Oct. 1974) One of the best genzines around. In this issue, Quane interviews Roger Elwood, and Patrick McGuire reviews Soviet sf. Plus a good lettercol. And it's frequent, too!

RANDOM #2 (Mike Gorra, 199 Great Neck Rd., Waterford, CT 06385; monthly, mimeo; 20 pp., for "Selected Trade, large dollops of egoboo and/or comment served up at frequent intervals to the editor, a Contribution, Vintage (or, if your name is Norm Clarke, hoary Old) fanzines, interesting letter of request, and \$45 per issue.") A year ago, Mike Gorra was another unknown neo, torn between fanac and football practice. Now, by sheer hard work (maybe he tries a little too hard) and a devotion to fandom, he's become the Boy Wonder of a new faanish generation. He produced nine issues of the excellent *Banshee*, climaxed by a special Tucker issue, a highlight of the Tucker Fund. Now here's *Random*,

fabulously, even arrogantly, faanish; Gorra disqualifies *TAC*, *Algol* and *Locus* from his egoboo poll. Egoboo poll? Yes; and Canfield, Kinney and Kunkel cartoons; a colophon dedicated to Joyce Katz and John D. Berry; the best of the younger fannish writers, Svoboda and Meyer; fannish humour by Gorra; a provocative serious article by Paul Walker; and...interlineations ("I wouldn't say he was a trufan, but he took acid and spoke to Laney.") You want more, trufan? Harry Warner, Jr., writes about Bob Tucker—simply, the finest tribute to that fannish legend I've seen.

But Mike, please, *please* improve your repro!

RUNE #39 and 40 (Fred Haskell, 343 E. 19th St. #8B, Minneapolis, MN 55404; irregular, mimeo: 28 and 22 pp., the usual or request. Aug., Sept. 1974) Clubzine; but what other club can boast the cartooning talents of Ken Fletcher? His article on listening to fanzines in #39 is a potential classic; so are Fred Haskell's photocovers of Tucker's "smo-o-o-th" routine. Minneapolis in '73!

SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY #40 (Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, Australia; irregular, mimeo; 60 pp., A60¢, US\$1. Sept. 1974.) Serious genzine. Bruce travels through the midwest and England, returns home, and reviews some books. Richard Delap examines *Again*, *Dangerous Visions* in depth, and the letterwriters discuss sf. Welcome back, SFC!

THE SPANISH INQUISITION #3 (Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Tompkins, 622 W. 114th St. #52A, New York, NY 10025; irregular, mimeo; 34 pp., 25¢ or the usual. Summer, 1974) You

don't have to be talented writers to produce a good genzine, but as Jerry and Suzle demonstrate, it helps. Recommended.

TREPONEMA PALLIDUM vol. 1 no. 3 (Richard Bartucci, Peach Hall Dormitory, Kansas City College of Osteopathic Medicine, 2105 Independence Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64124; irregular, mimeo; 14 pp., 50¢. Aug. 1974) Personalzine, hoping to "spread the adolescent word that fandom is fun."

TWIBBET #6 (Tim Kyger, 702 E. Vista Del Cerro, Tempe AZ 85281; tri-yearly, offset; 50 pp., 75¢. Oct. 1974) Genzine; Mark Nitikman interviews Norman Spinrad, Paula-Ann Anthony introduces Phoenix Phandom.

VECTOR #67-68 (Malcolm Edwards, 19 Ranmoor Gardens, Harrow, Middx. HA1 1UQ, UK; journal of the British Science Fiction Association, cheques payable to BSFA; irregular, offset; 80 pp., 45p, 5/A\$3, 5/US\$3. Spring, 1974) Another of those British marvels, the *entertaining* serious fanzine. This issue features three moving, personal tributes to Tolkein: Ursula K. LeGuin Gene Wolfe and Peter Nicholls tell what Tolkein's writing has meant to them. And that's just the beginning. *Vector* features intelligence without pomposity. Highly recommended.

—SUSAN WOOD
Department of English
University of Regina
Regina, Sask. S4S 0A2

Fully Automated (cont. from page 88)

know it has bars on the sides because I feel them moving around. When I move even a little, they start crawling over to grab me. But I don't have to worry about

that very much because I'm not going to move even the slightest bit.

—LINDA ISAACS

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Editorial (cont. from page 5)

new reader of that time, the idea was still fantastic to consider.

It is unlikely that without regularly published stf magazines, this evolution would have occurred nearly as fast, if at all.

Gernsback was also responsible—albeit probably inadvertently—for another important aspect of modern stf: science fiction fandom. From the beginning, he solicited letters from his readers for publication in AMAZING STORIES, and he promoted among his readership a proselytizing spirit with contests along the nature of "What I Have Done For Scientification." The idea was probably to help build circulation by introducing new readers to the magazine, but Gernsback was a visionary: he *believed* in stf. He felt it had the power to educate its readers, to influence their thinking toward ends beneficial for science and thus for humanity (no one at that time questioned the equation of science with the wellbeing of mankind, of course, and even today a good case can be made in its favor, despite the disrepute into which such somewhat naive notions have fallen). In any case, stf readers found themselves a minority among their contemporaries and quickly developed a sense of community with one-another—actively fostered by the letter column in AMAZING STORIES, through which they made most of their initial contacts. Out of this early coming together of stf readers and the subsequent creation of local fanclubs in the larger metropolitan areas, modern-day stf fandom was born. There is no arguing with the enormous importance of fandom upon the science fiction field: a significant majority of the best authors and editors in this field started out as stf readers and thence fans, a process

which shows no signs of abating even today. (Your editor was a fan for more than ten years before becoming a professional author of science fiction and, soon thereafter, an editor in the field; he still considers himself an active fan today.)

Thus the presence of *The Clubhouse*—the only column devoted to fandom and fan publications presently appearing in any professional stf magazine—gains an added significance. (In recently paging through issues of this magazine from the first years of my editorship, I came across a letter from a reader who wanted to know something about fandom and fanzines, all of which was brand new to him, then, since he had just encountered *The Clubhouse*. His name was Rick Stoker, and his letter appeared in our July, 1970, issue. Since then Rick has become an active fan and more recently he has sold me two stories, one of which you'll be reading here in an issue or two—the other will be in our companion magazine, FANTASTIC. There's an example of what I'm talking about, in a nutshell.)

So AMAZING can take credit for having given birth to both modern science fiction, as we know it today, and fandom as well, out of which have come many of our best creators of science fiction.

IN COMMEMORATION: 1976 will be more than the Bicentennial Year for the United States: it will mark the 50th Anniversary of modern Science Fiction. Under the circumstances, I believe a commemorative postage stamp would be appropriate and meaningful.

Considering the role of AMAZING in the creation of modern stf, as outlined above, I'd like to see a stamp which shows, perhaps, a miniature repro-

duction of the cover of our first issue, with the legend "FIFTY YEARS OF SCIENCE FICTION." Although to some extent this is a partisan suggestion, I think it would benefit the field as a whole and would be an appropriate observance. If you agree with me, I suggest you write a letter to The Postmaster General, United States Postal Service, Washington, D.C. 20260, outlining this suggestion in your own words, and offering whatever justifications for this suggestion you consider appropriate. Bear in mind that although a volume of letters will carry more weight than just one or two, volume alone will not be convincing to the committee which makes decisions of this nature. Your letter should be mature in tone and

dignified in presentation. A professional letterhead or the use of your professional title, if you have one, will be helpful. Enthusiastic incoherence will not be. It might help to point out the importance of science fiction in this country's space program and related scientific projects—many of today's scientists drew their earliest inspiration for their chosen field from an early interest in science fiction—even as Hugo Gernsback hoped would be the case. The present-day respectability of sf in the universities is well worth mentioning, especially if you are yourself a professional in education. If we act now, I think such a stamp is a good possibility. I hope you'll join me in this.

—TED WHITE

ON SALE MAY 29th IN AUGUST FANTASTIC

OLD HALLOWEENS ON THE GUNA SLOPES, by R.A. LAFFERTY, **TRANSFER** by BARRY N. MALZBERG, **THE DEVIL HIS DUE** by JOE HALDEMAN, **DEATH FROM THE SEA**, by HARVEY SCHREIBER, **EL-RON OF THE CITY OF BRASS**, by L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP, the conclusion of **COUNT BRASS** by MICHAEL MOORCOCK, and many other stories and features.

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Ursula K. LeGuin: *THE FARTHEST SHORE*, Atheneum, New York, 1972, 233 pp., hardcover, \$6.25

This is the third book in Ursula K. LeGuin's juvenile fantasy series, which started with *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968) and *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971). Even though these books are marketed as "juveniles," they are not juvenile in any derogatory sense of the term—in fact, they are better written than the vast majority of "adult" fantasy or sf now published.

Ted White was disappointed with *The Tombs of Atuan* when he reviewed it in February, 1972, but in *The Farthest Shore* LeGuin displays the same sort of skill and control that made the first novel in the series such a joy to read. In that novel, Ged, the main character, was just a young boy learning to develop his talents as a wizard. In *The Farthest Shore* Ged has grown older, and is now the archmage of Roke, the isle where all young men who wish to study magic and sorcery go to develop their wizardly skills. He is visited by Arren, a young man and son of the king of Enlad, and is told that magic no longer works in Enlad—the wizards there have forgotten their spells. This is not the only story Ged and the other wizards of Roke have

heard about the death of wizardry in the outer islands, and Ged decides to go alone with Arren to search out the cause of this phenomenon and destroy it.

Just as *A Wizard of Earthsea* was the story of Ged's growth to maturity, so *The Farthest Shore* is the story of Arren's growth to maturity. There is another parallel between the two novels: both deal with man's ability to face death. In *Wizard*, it is his own Death that Ged has called up from the land of the unliving and must face, while in this novel it is a temptation, a promise of freedom from death, which causes the mages and wizards to forget their skills and magical powers.

The imagination LeGuin displays in the novel is excellent; her tiny kingdoms, cultures, islands, are all well-realized and interesting in themselves. What is more, they contribute to the mood and theme of the novel, instead of being merely colorful places Arren and Ged visit. The last few chapters, in which Arren and Ged descend into the land of the dead, are among the most vivid and powerful I have read in any fantasy work. The reader can almost taste the dust that lies in that dark land LeGuin describes.

The novel is told in a fine, clear

style free of the heavy archaism that mars many other epic fantasies, and of the stylistic "cuteness" that often flaws the work of Harlan Ellison and Samuel R. Delany (to name just two). LeGuin leaves just a trace of archaism in her book, just enough to give it the right flavor, and those readers who many have been turned away from epic fantasy because of its purple prose needn't worry about that here.

Another factor that sets *The Farthest Shore* above the average fantasy novel is its depth of characterization and its emotional power. The novel's depth of characterization comes from LeGuin's careful attention to various tiny details: a character's embarrassed laugh, a certain facial expression, another character's kind word or crude gesture. We quickly brush by these details as we read a story, so they may not seem too important to us. But gradually, from them we build up an unconscious image of the character in our mind, just as from similar tiny details we build up a mental image of the people we meet in our day to day life. Thus, unlike a novel in which the author concentrates solely on action, we *care* a great deal more about these characters; the pain they feel, the struggles they go through, mean more to us and a greater emotional impact than it would otherwise. This is one of the reasons why characterization is so important in a story, and this is one of the reasons why *The Farthest Shore* is such an excellent book.

Sometimes it is harder to say why a book is good than to say why it is bad; but I think the very best books and stories are ones that can be read pleurably not only once, but again and again and again. *The Farthest Shore* is such a book. Read it; it is the best fantasy or sf novel published in

1972 I've been lucky enough to discover.

—Cy Chauvin

Barry Malzberg: *HEROVITS' WORLD*. Random House, Inc., New York, 1973. 209 pp., hardcover, \$4.95.

I am not a fan of Barry Malzberg's. I have read quite a few of his mercifully short stories and have found them marvelous examples of obfuscation. Those which I have understood would never have been published had they been written in a straightforward manner. They were just too damn slight. Oh, the man can write, all right; he's a magnificent technician. But the stories were just plain slices of life, without even a little oregano. At least, that is this one man's opinion, and there are many who disagree with me.

The point of the foregoing is that I approached *Herovits' World*, the first of his novels which I have read, with something less than a favorable frame of mind.

I found it to be one of the most brilliant and enjoyable novels I have read in my life. In fact, I will go so far out on a limb as to say that in this novel Barry Malzberg has done what Thomas Wolfe and F. Scott Fitzgerald (to name just two) were never able to do: write a believable novel about a writer.

Forget about science fiction: *Herovits' World* is not a science fiction novel; it is a novel about a science fiction hack writer. Some may call it a fantasy, but I'm not going to quibble.

Novels about writers are rife in the mainstream; Thomas Wolfe's voluminous four books are good examples. But almost invariably, such novels are about writers who are "ar-

tists" (probably the author himself thinly disguised), noble and suffering. One of the best of these is Oliver LaFarge's *The Copper Pot*, in which the long-suffering oafishness of the hero is mitigated by his naivete and youthfulness. I know of only one group of stories about a hack writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald's Pat Hobby stories, a light-hearted semi-humorous collection about a Hollywood script writer.

There is nothing light-hearted about John Herovits. There is humor, but it is the black variety. Herovits is a long-time hack writer, writing under the pseudonym Kirk Poland, who is approaching the 100th novel in his series about Mach Miller, Space Hero Extraordinaire. Malzberg sprinkles just enough of Herovits' incredibly bad prose ("It would be a decision which would affect forever the dealings of Earthmen with Melalberanins, and he knew that there would be no second chance for this. That is to say, the decision Mack made is one with which Earth would have to live for centuries and centuries—even, very possibly, throughout the complete future of the cosmos."—pp. 141-142 to make his point: Herovits is not an artist, probably never could have been, and certainly now never will be.

The world of this book is Herovits', plain and simple. Only a handful of other characters appear: Herovits' wife and child, an old friend, and a whore. His editor and agent are frequently mentioned and raked over the coals, but they do not actually appear in the narrative.

Malzberg claims (in *The Alien Critic* #8) that his characters were created from whole cloth. But that won't stop sf fans from identifying Herovits and his friend Mitchell Wilk

with sf writers, or John Steele ("the venerable editor of *Tremendous Stories*") with John Campbell, Jr., or the science-fiction guild with the Futurians and the League for Science-Fiction Professionals with the Science Fiction Writers of America. And what about the Hotel Eloquent (Algonquin?)? *Herovits' World* cannot help but raise certain questions in the minds of the sf fan: Just who is Herovits? Who are the real-life prototypes of Malzberg's characters? Perhaps they are created out of whole cloth, as Malzberg contends; or maybe his subconscious has melded various people in the sf world, primarily those who have been around for ten years or more, into each character.

But Malzberg doesn't merely content himself with dissecting his associates and companions (and possibly himself); he uses his scalpel with devastating effectiveness on the sf world itself:

"Anyway, as all of them have been saying for quite some time, science fiction is indeed a small, tight world. Only five or six hundred people in the country write it with any success at all; only another few thousand are involved to the point of being constant readers; and if you are going to meet up with someone you probably will, if not tomorrow, then by the week after next at the latest. Also, there is a delimitation in the field; for all of the manifest possibilities which its writers and editors always discuss at conventions, the truly great things to be done, events and plots revolve in the same weary combinations in their own lives. They marry one another's spouses, carry on feuds for forty years, and so on. This is really, despite the reputation it has gotten in the newsmagazines, a very cautious,

conservative little area, this science fiction. It is like an association of undertakers or dog handlers. Locales change, but the events and people are the same." (pp. 194-195)

Sf fandom will possibly reject Malzberg's descriptions of its world. Read the book: you may hate it, it may (and, if you are a "fan," it probably will) hit you right where you live. But it's not the kind of book you're likely to forget easily.

Of such stuff are classics made. It's a shame that the "mainstream" world will probably file *Herovits' World* safely away in the sf section and never read it.

—Grant Carrington

Roger Elwood, editor: *FUTURE CITY*, Trident Press, New York, 1973, Hardback, 255 pages, \$7.95.

Another anthology from the tireless Roger Elwood, *Future City* is a big book: nineteen stories and three poems written around the theme of man's urban future. When you think about it, it is surprising that no one has ever come up with a collection like this before. The city of the future has become such a standard, such a convention, in science fiction that it should probably be included in the list of sf "metaphors" which Alexei Panshin discussed in his *FANTASTIC* column, *Science Fiction In Dimension*.

In the Preface, Elwood indicates that some sociologists have compared our massive urban centers to the dinosaurs—cumbersome, unwieldy, fearful creations that have outlived their original purposes, and are now doomed to an eventual extinction. The editor obviously shares this pessimism about the city of the future, citing all the well-known problems of

urban environments: noise, bad air, traffic, crime, economic inflation, etc. Therefore, it is no accident that the majority of these stories are pretty dark visions. In fact, I recall Elwood telling me, back when he was soliciting stories for this book, that he wanted the material for *Future City* to be as downbeat as possible.

The best way to describe the anthology would be to say that it's a pretty good job—the table of contents reads like a *Who's Who* of sf, (plus one or two *Who's He's*)—on Elwood's part of getting the thing together. He has tried to arrange the stories in chronological order, so that the reader, as he goes through the book, gets a sense of the city evolving from the very near future all the way up to millions of years from now. The stories themselves are a mixed bag. Some of them are topflight tales, good writing, good plots, good ideas, etc. Others are short, compressed, sketchy and not very well thought out. Gathered all together, they give the anthology an uneven appearance.

"Thine Alabaster Cities Glean" by Laurence M. Janifer is one of the shorter pieces, but its length contributes to the subtle feeling of urban indifference and the pathos which it generates. "Culture Lock" by Barry Malzberg is a real weird one, which Elwood says is a "condemnatory treatment of homosexuality," but I think it is probably more than that—it has some of the most sensitive writing from Malzberg that I've ever seen. "Violation" by William F. Nolan is another good one, which examines the extremes to which a city and its fascistic government may go to prevent acts which may upset the delicate urban balance. The ending is absolutely chilling in its finality. "City Lights, City Nights" by Barry Malz-

berg (writing as K.M. O'Donnell) is, I feel, superior to his other piece. The characters are more fully realized, the idea more original, and the resolution, more valid, as he weaves a tale of repression and revolution around an attempt to re-create the assassination of JFK.

The three poems, "In Praise of New York" by Tom Disch, "As a Drop" by D.M. Price, and "Abendlandes" by Virginia Kidd, are difficult to comment on, since I don't pretend to know much about poetic expression. Any opinions I have on them are strictly from the gut, and in that context, I preferred Disch's piece of free verse.

"The World As Will and Wallpaper" by R.A. Lafferty is written in his usual wacky arrogant style, but unfortunately, it's a gimmick story which I could smell coming from very early on. "The Undercity" by Dean R. Koontz is a slick fast-moving piece about crime in a future city, as seen from the criminal's viewpoint; it's good fun. "Apartment Hunting" by Harvey and Audrey Bilker is an interesting extrapolation of the population explosion in the cities, but I couldn't believe the story's basic premise. It is extremely doubtful to me that urban conditions would deteriorate to the extent that a form of legalized murder would be condoned by the bureaucracy.

Thomas N. Scortia's "The Weariest River" is a long powerful story about the consequences of the double-edged sword of immortality in the city of the future. It is a personal tragic study of decay, decadence, and depths to which the human spirit can plunge. To say that it's depressing is putting it mildly, but that doesn't keep it from being a damn fine piece of writing. Following Scortia is a

strange wistful piece by Frank Herbert called "Death of a City." It is difficult to describe, since the content of the story is wrapped up in a mist of soft prose and purposefully obscure dialogue.

Robert Silverberg comes up with another fascinating idea and a plot that is filled with twists and turns in his "Getting Across." He asks a simple question: what would happen if someone stole the program to a totally computerized city and there was no replacement? In typical fashion, he answers with a well-thought out tale of intrigue and revelation. This was followed up by what I felt was one of the best stories in the collection, "In Dark Places" by Joe L. Hensley. Written in a simple, but deceptively surreal style, Hensley extrapolates the increasing friction between the races in our cities into a frightening Dalilike vision. The final scenes are quite similar to Ballard at his freaky, bizarre best—a great story.

"The Sightseers" by Ben Bova, "Meanwhile, We Eliminate" by Andrew J. Offut, and "Assasins of Air" by George Zebrowski are all competently written, but they are relatively minor pieces in light of some of the other stories in the collection, and especially when you consider some of the other fine stories that these three writers have produced in the past.

Robin Schaeffer's "Revolution" is another one of the shorter pieces that benefits from the compression; its basic premise sneaks up on you and catches you at the end before you have a chance to figure out what has been happening. It's effective and believable. "The Most Primitive" by Ray Russell is also short and sweet, but it's a cute tribute to one of our cities' most familiar residents.

Harlan Ellison's "Hindsight: 480

Seconds" is something different for him: a sensitive poetic account of the end of the last city on earth. It wouldn't seem so sentimental if you didn't know that Harlan was writing it—it's just so *unlike* him, I guess. At any rate, Miriam Allen deFord finishes the collection with "5,000,000 A.D." It serves as a fitting and inevitable epilog to the entire anthology, and of course, it's nicely written.

Except for a few rough spots, *Future City* reads very well, and it seems to be a fine example of what can be done with the growing number of "theme" anthologies that are appearing with increasing frequency. I suspect that lots of libraries will purchase the hardback edition: it has lots of well known writers, and is a very topical theme.

One more thing: I have excluded comment on my own story in the collection, "Chicago", for obvious reasons, but I would like to say something about it. On re-reading it for the first time since I sold it, I see things in it that I would revise if given the chance; nevertheless, I enjoyed writing it and it seems to hold its own with the rest of the pieces in the anthology.

But that's for you to decide.

—Thomas F. Monteleone

Lin Carter: *IMAGINARY WORLDS*, Ballantine, New York, 1973, 278 pp., paperback, \$1.25

Lin Carter was the editor of Ballantine Books' Adult Fantasy Series, as well as a fantasy author in his own right, and thus is well suited to write *Imaginary Worlds*, the first general survey of fantasy literature ever published—or so Carter claims in his introduction.

The book is a fairly in-depth survey

(considering the amount of material Carter has to cover), and for anyone who isn't satisfied with the information Carter has given him on a particular subject or author, there are fifteen pages of references at the back of the book. Authors covered range from William Morris, who gave the modern "imaginary world" fantasy most of its now traditional conventions and forms in the late 1800's, to such present-day fantasy authors as Avram Davidson, Ursula K. LeGuin, and Evangeline Walton. There are also three chapters on techniques and problems that are especially important to the fantasy writer.

Carter uses an excessive (and wholly unnecessary, in my opinion) number of footnotes, which might make the book look very scholarly and academic to the casual newsstand browser. It isn't; instead, it's a very easy and enjoyable book to read. Carter throws out a lot of interesting observations, such as his point in the chapter on "World-Making" that "the fantasy author should do *everything possible* to convince his reader that his invented world is real and genuine." Carter then goes on to say that some knowledge of the climatological causes behind deserts and geological causes behind mountains is important if the fantasy writer is going to make his world seem convincing. Carter's comments destroy that old notion that fantasy is somehow an easier, less rigorous type of fiction to write than science fiction, historical fiction, mysteries, etc. The writer's imagination must be kept under intelligent discipline, Carter says; our "suspension or disbelief" is just as important in a fantasy story as it is in any other kind.

Something else worth ferreting out is Carter's reference to such works as

E.R. Burroughs's Mars novels, David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus*, and Vance's *The Dying Earth*, all as *fantasy* novels. This is interesting because I suspect a sizable number of readers regard these works as *sf*. Reading Carter's comments reminds me of how thin the borderline between *sf* and *fantasy* is; I'm sure a good argument over which of the two categories the above mentioned works belong to could easily be started. It's not just a simple matter of a story being possible or impossible; I think, for instance, that ghosts are infinitely more possible than time machines, yet the former is the province of *fantasy* while the latter is *sf*. Perhaps the reason why the Burroughs novels, the Lindsay, the Vance, seem like a hybrid of the two is because they mix together indiscriminately *fantasy* and *sf* traditions—i.e., ghosts and time machines, magic and science, swash-buckling princes and spaceships. Whether this is proper or not, I shall leave to someone else to decide.

Carter does have his faults and idiosyncrasies—as does everyone. For instance, he objects to Alexei & Cory Panshins' comment (in one of their *SF in Dimension* columns which used to appear in *FANTASTIC*) that sword & sorcery is "a living fossil with no apparent ability to evolve", but he then goes on to state himself that the genre is "completely derivative." What is more, Carter says that the genre has no *need* to improve; if readers want more mature *fantasy*, they can look for it elsewhere, in "adult *fantasy*." After rereading Carter's comments several times, I can only conclude that there is no real difference between what he says and what the Panshins have said. The only thing is 1) Carter doesn't believe

the faults sword & sorcery has matter; 2) it's all right for Carter, who writes sword & sorcery to criticize the genre, but not for a couple of "new wave writers" (Carter's term) like Alexei & Cory Panshin.

Carter also lets himself get carried away in his chapter on the coinage of names in *fantasy* stories. There is a great deal of truth in what he says about the proper invented name evoking just the right sort of connotations for the reader (whether the story is *fantasy* or *sf*), but the excessive use of unfamiliar names in a book just confuses the reader and adds nothing to the work. For instance, at one point Carter quotes from one of his own books and says of a character: "From the hue of his skin, he's a Turanian; yet he wears his hair in the fashion of the Northern Kingdoms, and speaks with the accent of Illurdis." What hue of skin is a Turanian? How do people in the Northern Kingdoms wear their hair? What kind of accent do the people of Illurdis have? The reader knows no more about this character at the end of this passage than at its start, because the invented names don't *mean* anything to him. Words are meant to communicate something, and when they fail to do that they become merely printed noise.

But, as I said *Imaginary Worlds* is not an academic study, not a critical work; the best way to see this is to compare Carter's somewhat vague comments on A. Merritt with those by James Blish in *More Issues At Hand*. Still, within its limits *Imaginary Worlds* is an excellent book, and I can't imagine any reader who pores over de Camp's *Literary Swordsmen & Sorcerers* in *FANTASTIC*, or the various introductions Carter writes to the other books

in Ballantine's Adult Fantasy Series, not enjoying it.

-Cy Chauvin

Robert Vacca: *THE COMING DARK AGE* (translated from the Italian by Dr. J. S. Whale), Doubleday & Company Inc., Garden City, NY, 1973, \$6.95, 221 pages.

Back in June of 1964, I came to the conclusion for some reason that we were in for a world catastrophe, a complete collapse of world leadership, before the year 2000. It's impossible to find all the things that led me to that conclusion, but the immediate catalysts at that time were an article on coal-miners in *The Atlantic Monthly* and a book called *Culture Against Man*. I'm sure that my familiarity with science fiction was also an important factor, perhaps *the* most important factor.

Readers and especially writers of sf are fully aware of the interactions between the various subsystems that keep not only our civilization but especially our entire biosystem functioning. A major upheaval in one subsystem will affect the others, possibly bringing about the collapse of several different subsystems of the entire biosystem. Of course, new ones will arise to fill in the gap thus created.

Therefore, when I was through with Roberto Vacca's *The Coming Dark Age* I had the feeling that he had told me nothing I already didn't know. I believe many sf readers will have the same feeling, much as they did about *Future Shock*. Unfortunately, this book has not been getting the same play that *Future Shock* got; and it is far more deserving of general readership.

Vacca's thesis is that the many large subsystems of Western civilization are

becoming unmanageable and the collapse of one or two could result in the collapse of our entire civilization and an ensuing dark age. This is the old domino theory, applied to economics instead of communism. It may be more applicable here.

It is the more technically developed countries that Vacca sees as being the most severely hit by the collapse: "Countries that are less advanced than others . . . will only be involved in the crisis to a marginal extent. Seventy per cent of the population of the world will not be much injured by the first wave of destruction. On the other hand, the more advanced nations will be more vulnerable . . . in the dark age that would follow, their total population might be halved." (page 5)

Vacca sees this new dark age as lasting less than a century.

Vacca steps slowly through each of the major subsystems (electricity, traffic control, communications, computers, water supply and sanitation), documenting various breakdowns that have already occurred. More than half of the documented breakdowns come from the U.S., with the cities of Europe supplying most of the remainder. (Japan also provides a few.) Vacca points out that while such breakdowns have been common in Europe throughout modern history, they are something new in America. America used to be cited as an example of a well-run system, one that properly foresaw potential problems and took the necessary steps to prevent them in advance; but in the past ten years, the breakdowns have begun to occur here as well. (Vacca does not point this out, but it seems to this reviewer that the breathing spaces between major breakdowns have become shorter and shorter

since the 1965 Northeast power blackout. It was several years till the next one; now we have subsystem crises every six months or less.)

Most of what Vacca points out will come as nothing new to sf readers. (One remembers Asimov's statement in *The Early Asimov* to the effect that he was accused of reading "escape literature" when he was a kid reading sf stories about traffic jams, air pollution, and all that Buck Rogers stuff.) There will be particular points, however, of which each individual will not have been aware. (I was intrigued by the relations between water supply and sewage disposal; it was an aspect of interconnecting systems I had not considered.) Vacca touches on the almost incoherent way that management is approaching these problems, more often than not choosing approaches that treat only one subsystem rather than using a multiple-variant approach. This is understandable: the multiple-variant approach is more difficult; unfortunately, it is the only approach that seems to offer any way out of the morass in which we now find ourselves. But Vacca is a pessimist: he does not believe that even a multiple approach to these problems will prevent a dark age. At best, they will hold off the collapse for a few years, perhaps soften it somewhat, and shorten the length of the dark age. But frankly, that's better than doing nothing. Vacca postulates the formation of monastic communities, who will hold the scientific knowledge of our age until Man emerges from the dark age. Such communities would be self-sufficient, possibly situated in a fortress on top of some easily-defended promontory.

Sound familiar?

There are a few minor quibbles, as usual, to pick with this book. Vacca's thesis is, apparently, at best only a thesis: he cites very few examples of each type of breakdown. This makes the book vastly more readable, but leaves a good deal of doubt as to its probability of truth. More research needs to be done, although this is an excellent first attempt.

The book's dust jacket says that Vacca claims the dark age will come between 1985 and 1994, but I could find no such claim anywhere in the book itself. Even if he does, there is not justification in the book for such a precise prophecy. (Frankly, I'm beginning to feel such a prophecy would be very optimistic. I tend to agree with Sun Bear, the editor of *Many Smokes*, the American Indian magazine: "I am preparing to go to my mountain, my brothers and sisters, I can only give you good advice. Find people who you can love and live with, people who share the same direction, and then prepare food resources.")

Vacca also faults management for its failure to foresee some of the problems that have arisen. At times, this sounds a bit like Monday-morning quarterbacking.

This book will provide little new information to regular readers of sf. But, if you work in a large organization, buy a copy anyway and give it to the highest person in management you can reach. Send a copy to your congressman. (Are you listening, Doubleday?)

The world you save may be your own.

—Grant Carrington

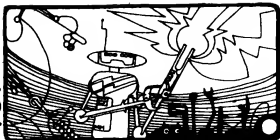
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THE FUTURE IN BOOKS

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...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and addressed to *Or So You Say*, Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.

Dear Ted,

Three corrections to statements in the March issue: 1) pg. 113: "With Folded Hands" (ASF, 7/47) is not an excerpt from *The Humanoids* (ASF, 3, 4, 5/48 as "...And Searching Mind"), but the "prequel" to the novel; 2) pg. 114: Avon, not Ballantine, is the current publisher of *Bring The Jubilee*; 3) pg. 124: Rand McNally published a U.S. edition of *Challenge of the Stars* in 1972.

UNSIGNED POSTCARD

Postmarked New York, N.Y. 10001
*Cy Chauvin and I stand corrected;
next time let us know who you are.*
—TW

Dear Ted,

Pg Wyal's "They've got some hungry women there. . ." in the March 1975 issue of AMAZING has prompted me to write my first letter to a pro-zine (maybe not, since I feel that I know you somewhat through fanish contacts. This is just a dear ted letter and you can print it or not. Hopefully bigger names than I will be calling you to task).

Anyway, that story insults women. Perhaps not all women, but it cer-

tainly uses the stereotypes and catch-words that insult lesbian women. The story also insults blacks and mexican americans ("nigger lips" p. 54, "greaser," "mex," "mex-type," and "seester," pp. 42-44), but those are just incidents. The main tone of the story plays up to the prejudices that the dual movements of Women's and Gay Liberation are trying to fight.

Pg Wyal makes it clear that Sal is a lesbian. "Queer" Sal, "hard faced dame in black leathers," "bitchy," who hangs out at "Dykes & Dolls." These are words that have prejudicial meanings to the average reader. But what kind of woman is Queer Sal? Not the kind of woman that lives in *Lesbian Nation*, *Flying*, or *Ruby Fruit Jungle* (three recent intelligent and articulate books on lesbian women). Queer Sal is portrayed as a loser from beginning to end, a reject of society, whose only interest in life seems to be sex with women, treated as a perversion.

Of course it's possible to portray people as losers, but it seems unkind to attribute their deficiencies to their sex life (no, sexual preference).

What I'm trying to say is that Queer Sal serves to do nothing but enforce the prejudices that hurt people. If the average reader goes on thinking that all lesbians are perverts, they're going to go right on treating

them as perverts, through repressive laws and even more repressive actions. I'm not going to say that science fiction should be educational, but I think it is our responsibility to not keep things the way they are when they are damaging to real people's lives.

After all, we've almost eliminated the Step'n Fetchit characters, the nordic space captains, the yellow perils. But there's a few more stereotypes to go. I wonder, would the story have been bought if the character had been a gay man? Gay men are getting organized, but I think that the story will not raise as many eyebrows because women are still quite powerless. Does science fiction need people to kick around any more?

Dammit, Ted, gay women have so much flack coming down from all sides, does it have to come down from what should be one of the most enlightened parts of society?

On a lighter note, I don't think it matters much one way or the other whether you charge a quarter to read manuscripts. I've sold a story to *Orbit*, so it doesn't apply to me, but if it did, I'd pay a quarter since I pay more than that on postage alone anyway. God knows the slushpile is a problem with all the prozines, and maybe charging a quarter will make people think a little bit more about whether the story they're sending in is good enough to waste someone else's time on.

SETH MCEVOY
Box 268
E. Lansing, MI 48823

Seth, I'm afraid you almost entirely missed the point of "They've Got Some Hungry Women There. . ."—and the question of whether Queer

Sal accurately reflects present-day norms among lesbians is totally beside the point since she is neither a present-day character nor in any respect typical of her own time. I didn't notice Wyal attributing Sal's deficiencies as a person to her sex life in either "Hungry Women" on the earlier "Border Town" (about which you did not complain); nor does her "only interest in life seem to be sex with women, treated as a perversion." As for my purchasing such a story had the character been a male homosexual, I have no taboos in that regard—unlike you, I am willing to accept the fact that one's sexual preferences do not determine whether one wears a white hat or a black hat. Nor have I received any other letters (from "bigger names" or otherwise) protesting Queer Sal's characterization. In these touchy times it helps to retain one's sense of humor—what happened to yours?—TW

Dear Ted:

It's both exhilarating and exasperating to read over the letter column in March 75's AMAZING. My first impressions towards the "cons" involving the \$.25 reading fee was that of annoyance. Actually, there is no other way out that I could see, if you don't mind me saying that again.

\$.25 is, contrary to Mr. Furphy's statement, hardly a skin "off the hide" of writers, no matter how you look at it. *Twenty-five cents?* Ah, come off it, man. . . you spend about that much every time you flush the toilet and the plumbing bill adds up. After a bit of calculation, four flushes just might total four submissions (to the dismay of you know who). An issue of AMAZING costs \$.75, and that's three manuscript fees right there. When I brush my teeth, it haunts me to think that

that might be one manuscript down the drain (I could hear the editorial ball-park cheering and striking up the band). But what's more important? Saving \$.25 and getting your manuscript at least read for that price (tax deductible, mind you) or driving to your dull-time job for five times as much each day? Talking of dreams and escapist literatures. . .

You, too, can be an *aspiring writer* (the infamous words mumbled by slush pile scientists and their hunch-backed assistants. "Dr.?" "Yes, Igor?" "What eest done wit da *slush pile*?" "We'll work out something, Igor. . ."). I'm unpublished, a stargazer with macroscopic (some editors think, my lens needs cleaning) visions, getting Will Faulkner drunk on LA subways (strange, too, as LA has no subways), and glancing quickly over March 75's cover and shouting, *I want to be a Writer!*

But I'm glad to see there are others, Mr. White, in *Or So You Say* who, like me, gaze out by the hundreds through a multitude of windows and, just maybe, dream a bit secretly of becoming a writer for AMAZING. And nobody ascends to a given place by doing absolutely nothing. This means both editor and writer, no matter how divergent, have very, very little to lose by staying connected. Refusing to "consider" manuscripts from "unknowns" is analogous to cutting off the umbilical cord which makes AMAZING the animating, pulsating, breathing 50-year-old embryo-organism, that it is. Like that star-child in 2001, AMAZING's something "out there". AMAZING is hope and the greatest ice cream, man-in-the-white-suit dream, that every imaginative, all-American boy could have. Imagination is a great old sport, and AMAZING leads the ball park because

they've realized this. The \$.25 reading fee is something outlandishly honest. . . maybe too honest for its own good. It shows that AMAZING is aware of that "aspirer" out there in the ranks of fandom and slush piles and crudzines. And it's something admirable, if not totally unheard of before in science fiction editing.

I know there will be other young writers, too, all hoping and hoping, because it seems \$.25 is a *very, very* small price to pay, indeed ("That's the stuff dreams are made of. . .").

I wonder if AMAZING will be with us in 2001. I'm praying that it will.

JON INOUYE
12319 Areta St.
Culver City, CA. 90230

Dear Ted—

Concerning the recent decision to have submissions accompanied by 25¢ in coin or stamps I can only say that I am in complete agreement. Too many hours with no return have been put into the reading of manuscripts and I applaud your decision.

Also, should any of my submissions to accepted by your mags, I would rather not have the charge refunded to me. The story still had to be read and time still had to be spent in that reading. In other words, *don't* refund the charge to me if any of my submissions are accepted because I'll be forced to use another stamp to send it back.

AUGUSTINE FUNNELL
The Fantasy Factory
Box 1599, Gananoque
Ontario, Canada

Dear Ted:

Beautiful cover! My own humble opinion predicts great things for Denise Watt if she keeps this kind of thing up. Generally, I prefer a non-

framed cover painting, but this one, beyond a doubt, was worthy of the framing.

Your editorial on the Hugos was quite interesting, particularly in regards to the fan Hugos. One thing you fail to mention (from modesty?) is that the real "non-ironical, but curiously appropriate" thing is that *you* yourself won the Best Fanwriter Hugo the year after its inception. I'm not sure why you ignored the fact, but I think a misimpression may have been caused about the "closed circle" you mentioned. It was already closed in a nice short loop.

Alas, the Best Editor Hugo. Well, you can't win them all—but third for that continuous length of time is getting a bit redundant. You better do something about that this year.

Well, your pro and con comments on the 25fl controversy were of a nice nature, but what do you think of what Jessie Salmonson had to say about you (after all, how many companies are there that fit her description) and your brainstorm? In *Outworlds*, a fanzine you write a column for, a young lady says she wants to shove a quarter up your ass. Now that has to get your sentimental heart all warmed up.

Unfortunately, your reports of those editors who said "you should have made it a buck" lends more—not less—credence to what she gives as her major complaint. I'm afraid this is going to give you a big problem in getting "first looks". You pay the lowest rates, have the smallest readership, and now are the most expensive to submit to. I'm afraid you are going to end up getting only stories that have already been bounced everywhere else. It was different when the unpublished writers thought you had a special interest in them, they were willing to consider you

equal with the others. Now, they feel like you are exploiting them and hold them in total disregard. It seems that the two bits isn't the real objection of most, it's the contempt you seem to be showing.

John M. Furphy isn't typical. Most would-be-authors I've talked to say they won't submit to you even after they've sold and the reading fees don't apply to them. It's become a matter of principle. I don't know, all things considered, I understand what you felt you had to do. But, as it was pointed out to me, the fact that you have exempted SFWA members and those qualified for membership, it does show great contempt for the unpublished writer. It makes your former claims of great interest in them appear hypocritical. I realize this may not be the case, but it is the way it looks.

With the circulation figures given in this issue, you really can't afford to alienate anyone. Some of these would-be-authors may even stop buying your zine out of disgust.

I was pleased to see the *Clubhouse* in this issue, but I'm wondering—is this every other issue bit going to be on a regular basis?

I was happy to see the lengthy book reviews this time. I think, however, that it would have been better to have the same reviewer do both "Best of Year" anthologies, in order to contrast them.

I have to disagree with Thomas Monteleone's comment that the writers in *Chains of the Sea* are an indicator of "the" direction sf will be taking in the seventies. It is *one* of several—and hardly a dominant one at that. The three of them are both of the type and mode of what you have used in dominant quantities in AMAZING and FANTASTIC and your zines

have been at the opposite end of a dominant scale. There have been successes in that area, but it's hardly "the direction."

Cy Chauvin did a great job on his reviews, damn it, I don't have a single gripe. Hell, that takes half the fun out of reading reviews.

The fiction was fairly good this issue. I was particularly pleased to see the story by H. L. Gold. I also liked the Carrington story very much. Now that he isn't connected with the magazine in an editorial capacity, I look forward to seeing more of his fiction.

WAYNE W. MARTIN
4623 E. Inyo, Apt. E
Fresno, California 93702

Since I won that Hugo in 1968, it didn't seem appropriate to mention it in an editorial commenting upon the current awards. As for the 25¢ reading fee, as you'll note from the foregoing letters the reaction from all would-be-authors is not negative—nor have submissions dropped off significantly. Those would-be-authors who feel I am treating them with contempt and are declining to submit to AMAZING and FANTASTIC are cutting off their noses to spite their faces. These magazines have been, under my editorship, consistently more receptive to new authors than any other in the field. This will continue to be true. But the sad fact is that better than 90% of the slush-pile submissions we receive is the work of untalented writers and a waste of our time. This is true of the slush-piles of all sf magazines, of course; the only difference is that we're asking unpublished authors to pay us a very nominal fee for the time we spend in reading their stories. This has the effect of encouraging our first-readers at what otherwise sometimes feels like a hope-

less task.—TW

Dear Ted,

Your reply to my letter in the March AMAZING, in which you defend the publication of stories by authors in *some* way connected with your magazines, seemed quite reasonable, and I must admit that I jumped to some hasty conclusions in accusing you of padding your pages. (My objections to the stories themselves still stand; but, as you say, there's no point in arguing matters of taste.) Although my preconceptions might have influenced my opinions of the stories, might not the same principle apply to you, whose preconceptions of certain authors might cause you to unconsciously accept their stories more readily? Naturally, it might work the other way and cause you to be rather hypercritical, but could you claim with authority to *know* which way it works? I wonder if sf editors have ever instituted the policy prevalent among editors of many professional journals, who read submissions which are labelled only by number and not by name. This might be slightly unwieldy in dealing with the slush, but could possibly eliminate unconscious bias in the handling of professional manuscripts.

The March issue seems to mark the continuance of an upwardswing in terms of quality. It was especially nice to see Gordon Eklund gracing your pages again. And although I don't mean to pick on Mr. Carrington again, I *was* a little disappointed by his short-short; it seemed more point-less than pointed, and intruded a disconcerting note into an otherwise fine issue. There seems to be a trend of "60s" stories starting, stories usually marked by a case of overdone satire and sloppy dialogue regularly

punctuated by phrases like "You know, man" to which we can point proudly and announce: "That's '60s talk."

My only other complaint revolves around a seeming deterioration in your book reviews. First, all the works reviewed in the March issue are over a year old; this fact coupled with a few peculiar editorial comments suggested that the reviews had been collecting dust on the inventory shelf for several months. And while book reviews need not necessarily be as well-written or constructed as fiction, Cy Chauvin appeared to be having trouble stringing together interesting sentences. Somehow I think he could have avoided awkward phrasing such as "goodness is relative," or the repetitive "in the sense that it is written with sensitivity." The closing sentences had me really gritting my teeth: If I read one more review climaxing with the command to "Buy. Read. Enjoy." I am much more likely to "Search. Find. Strangle." the offending critic.

Finally, in search of the perfect masthead: is Grant Carrington still with you, or did he resign (effective last July) as you stated in October? Are Monteleone and Snead busily wading through the slush, and, if so, why don't you credit them on the masthead, as you promised in that same issue?

I expect you will follow *Analog's* lead and boost your price to an even buck, which seems an awful lot for even a digest-size magazine; someday, I suppose, I will realize that I am living in 1975, whereupon I will stop grousing about prices and start worrying about more important things . . . like . . .

PETER C. MANDLER
1406 La Jolla Knoll
La Jolla, CA 92037

Editorial judgment is not easily codified and objectified; ultimately I try to buy the stories which please me, and hope that my pleasure is shared by a majority of my readers. (Every story brings both complaints and praise from different readers, unfortunately.) Perhaps reading stories without names might be practical—if we had the staff to handle the added work that would require. As it is, when a story arrives I am the first to handle it, and will obviously be aware of its authorship—even if I turn it over to my staff of readers (which I do not do in the case of established professional authors, in any case). You've put your finger on a basic problem connected with the Future In Books department. The reviews in question were originally set in type for our June, 1974 issue, and repeatedly squeezed out of successive issues. The same thing happened with reviews scheduled for our last issue—which may be squeezed out of this issue as well. There is only one workable solution: after the reviews presently in type are used up we shall not be publishing further book reviews in this magazine. As for the masthead, Carrington lingers as an Associate Editor Emeritus; we have not added the names of present first-readers largely at their own request—and also because they would swell the masthead to an unweildy size. Present first-readers include: Thomas F. Monteleone, Richard Snead, J. Michael Nally, Michael Gerard, Richard W. Brown and Linda Isaacs. Each of these people reads the manuscript load with which he (or she) is comfortable, collecting the 25¢ fee on those manuscripts. Each is (or will be) a professionally published author; all are members of a local writers' workshop group which meets weekly, thus

facilitating the distribution of manuscripts and their return to me of those stories they consider worthy of my attention. Each first-reader has suffered through slush-pile submissions himself and is sympathetic to the authors of those stories in our slush pile. At present AMAZING and FANTASTIC are the only remaining 75¢ stf magazines, Analog, Galaxy and F&SF having boosted their price to \$1.00; we hope to retain the 75¢ price for as long as we can. Shortly, however, Vertex (presently \$1.50) will change to a tabloid format and drop its price to 75¢, while boosting its schedule from bimonthly to monthly. We shall see what effect that has upon the rest of the field.—TW

Dear Ted White,

The approaching anniversary of AMAZING—its 50th—has impelled me to write you with an historical look over the shoulder.

It was in April 1926 that I bought my first copy. In those days we were able to buy 2 mags for the price of one, and I recall that the other mag was *Wonder Stories*. The page sizes were about 8½ x 11 and cost a few pence. My brother and I used to make regular trips to the newsagent to purchase our copies. These were kept in long racks around the walls of the shop, and each copy bore the stamp giving the name of the owner of the shop and price. The early page sizes were around 96, but gradually built up over the years to a massive 180. The first cover artists I recall was Frank R. Paul and Leo Morey, and these two did the covers for about 12 years. Two years later came the Quarterly Editions. These were eagerly awaited for having some 144 pages and were packed with great yarns by the now legendary figures of SF, i.e.

Jack Williamson, Murray Leinster, Will Ley, Stanley G. Weinbaum, Stanton A. Coblenz, Paul Ernst, Ed Earl Repp, Manly Wade Wellman, John W. Campbell, and many more. A roll call of honour indeed.

I still have some of the early copies, including the Quarterlys, in the attic, and have kept them with me during the many house moves I have made over all those years.

I am now a regular mail subscriber, and receive my copy direct from Flushing.

I noticed on page 91 of the March issue—Statement of Circulation—that over 44 thousand copies were not sold. Should you not reduce your print run to cut cost, as I assume you have to pay for the full run at the printers.

In conclusion to this letter, I wish you all success in the future with AMAZING, and hope to be around on the 100th anniversary, although I would probably have to be put into suspended animation to celebrate the occasion.

RALPH PEMBERTON
"Westwood,"

Bell Lane, Bedmond,
Abbots Langley,

Herts. WD5 OQS, England

I appreciate your kind wishes, but I think your memory is playing you false. Although AMAZING did indeed first appear with the April, 1926, issue, Wonder Stories made its debut in 1929 as Science Wonder Stories, and did not become Wonder Stories until June, 1930, when it merged with its companion, Air Wonder Stories. Likewise, Early issues of both AMAZING and Wonder Stories appeared in a larger, "bedsheet" size, the somewhat smaller "pulp-sized" issues not appearing until the arly 1930's (although both Weird Tales and Astounding

Stories of Super-Science were pulped from the start). The 44,000 unsold copies represent copies printed and put on sale. If we eliminated them we would have far fewer copies to put on sale, and would thus disappear from at least half of those locations where we are now sold. That, in turn, would drive our sales still lower—and probably put us out of business. Unfortunately, it appears that due to the present distribution system it is difficult to sell more than one-third of those copies (presumably) put on display—and this holds true not only for most sf magazines, but a great many paperback books as well.—TW

Dear Ted:

There is something in Ms. Lucas' letter (Dec. '74) which needs comment. She implies that because she can become pregnant and men cannot, her opinion on abortion is more valuable. I could argue that since men cannot become pregnant, our opinion is more worthy of consideration since we can look at the subject more objectively. This conclusion is just as wrong as Ms. Lucas'.

If it would be "highly irresponsible" for her to bring a child into the world I suggest sterilization as a better solution than the Pill with its failure rate and a possible abortion. It would also prevent the "parasite" from feeding on any of her precious bodily fluids even for a few days or weeks.

On to the fiction. The Dec. AMAZING with its complete stories was excellent. Harness' "The Araqnid Window" was the best treatment of a combination of Space Exploration and Time Travel since Andre Norton's

Galactic Derelict. It is sooo hard to write a good story combining two main themes of SF. I first became aware of Charles L. Harness when I picked up a hardcover copy of his *Flight into Yesterday* (1953) for 50¢ in a bookstore in Toronto in the early 60s.

The stories in this issue were so good that even now, five days after finishing the mag, I can still recall the stories by running down the titles on the contents page.

Benford's "Why Civilization" was interesting. History never fascinated me until I read Wells' *Outline of History*. Will we ever know for certain anything that took place before recorded history?

RONALD J. ANDRUKITIS
P.O. Box 1344
Homestead, FL. 33030

Ms. Lucas' opinion on abortion may not be more valuable, but it is more relevant, since she is directly affected by abortion laws, and we men are not. It is all very well to suggest sterilization, but that is in most cases permanent, while her attitude toward having a baby may change in time and she has a right to keep her options open. Then too, any operation which can be avoided should be avoided: unforeseen complications claim the lives of entirely too many people who have undergone even minor operations—one of whom was my mother-in-law, Naomi Postal (see my February, 1974, editorial). (It can be argued that an abortion is also potentially dangerous for the woman undergoing it—however, pregnancy is ten times more dangerous. . .)—TW

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